

AUGUST 4/11, 2003

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DOUBLE ISSUE

The Nation.

SHOWTIME

IN IRAQ

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BUSH'S

NIGERCATE

THUGGERY

David Corn

AFRICA,

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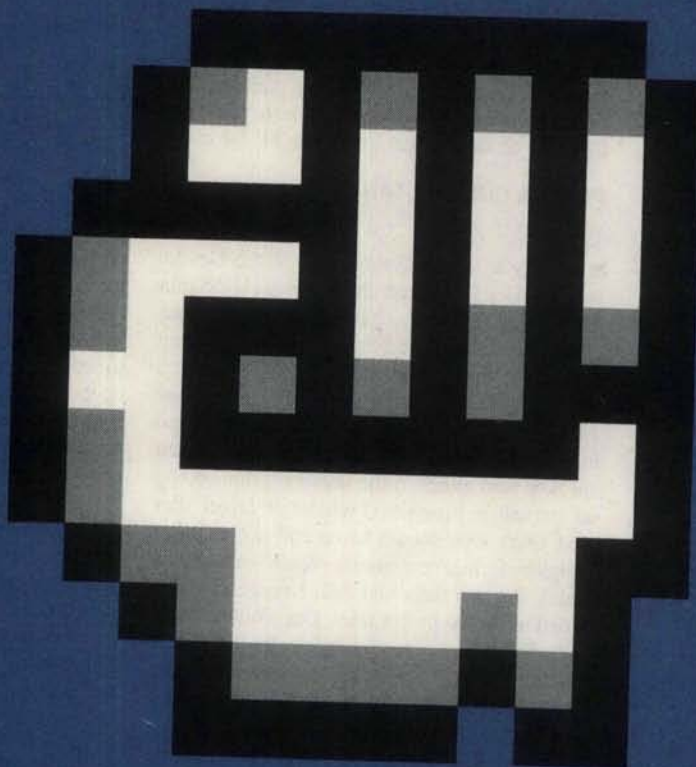
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LETTERS



R.O. BLECHMAN

Mail still pours in praising Renana Brooks's June 30 "A Nation of Victims." She has been contacted by several Democratic presidential candidates, her article was circulated among Democratic Party leaders, she's been invited to appear on nationally syndicated talk shows and asked to address several Democratic groups on countering the hypnotizing effects of the conservative message machine. —The Editors

DUBYA-SPEAK: MEAN & MEANER

Carmel Valley, Calif.

■ Reading Renana Brooks's analysis of Bush's speaking style, I have to say he sounds like a spouse abuser on the one hand, and a demagogue on the other. The perfect example of a right-wing family values politician! JANE SMILEY

Cantril, Iowa

■ Brooks's piece should be required reading for all Democratic presidential hopefuls, as well as anyone wishing to restore sanity and optimism to our political debate. An understanding of W's manipulative rhetoric and the warped psychology behind it may well be the key to his defeat in 2004, and the survival of American democracy. JERALD THOMAS HAWHEE

Hawthorne, Nev.

■ Reading Renana Brooks explaining George W. Bush's speaking manner, which induces fear and dependency, I understand why I punch the mute when he appears on TV. His resemblance to Big Brother is scary. JAMES D. STEMPEL

Georgetown, Me.

■ Excellent! Excellent! Excellent! Renana Brooks discerns the source of our national hypnosis: George W. Bush's foreboding, me-centered (not US-centered) language. She's right—we need to get back in touch with our core optimism and courage. MOLLY WILLCOX

Woodbury, Minn.

■ Bush's language, whether he designs it, or it is crafted for him, is the language of abuse, designed to terrify and subdue an entire nation. Abusers know that fear is their greatest friend. While Franklin Roosevelt said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself," George W. Bush says, "We must be fearful," with the subtext "or I'll lose power." DICK BERNARD

Davis, Calif.

■ Bush bypasses analysis and goes for the gut. Gore lost the debates because his approach involved facts and explanations rather than emotions. Bush speaks in conversation-stoppers, to stun the opposition. A Democratic presidential candidate must be able to beat him at his own

game and convince Americans, with humor and anger, that Bush has wreaked havoc abroad and here at home. SHERMAN STEIN

Astoria, NY

■ My concern is not Bush and his empty language; my concern is, Who are the manipulators of the language behind him? I'd like to see some light fall on their faces. WALTER M. JACKMAN

POMP & CIRCUMSTANCE

Santa Cruz, Calif.

■ In "My Life as a Rabbi" ["Beat the Devil," July 7], Alex Cockburn characterizes UC Santa Cruz's Kresge College graduation ceremony as "benign platitudes" and chides me for not letting my radical lineage intrude on the event. Well, it's not my graduation, and the students choose the speaker. I am an emcee with a funny robe and hood. But Alex seems to have missed the student speaker who attacked the university for ending its journalism program (I will be on layoff after next year). One should be careful not to judge things by formal ceremonies. When we lecturers struck for two days last fall, Kresge students joined us on the picket lines. Our students were in the forefront against the war in Iraq. Many of those graduating have spent the past four years doing their best to roll back the tide of empire.

Alex is, indeed, a friend. My brother Kayo and I took him on his first demonstration, the 1961 Aldenmasten March. I admire his courage as a journalist and his skills as a writer. So in the spirit of good friendship I urge him to stop referring to himself as "Anglo-Irish." We "Irish-Irish" call those people "Brits," and for the past 834 years we have asked them—sometimes not too politely—to go home. CONN HALLINAN

Provost, Kresge College

COCKBURN REPLIES

Petrolia, Calif.

■ I did listen. That student calling for the revival of the journalism program was what clinched it for me. J-schools, or j-programs, are an abomination. The worse a campus newspaper, the more likely there's a j-school, with the student-journalists busy piling up respectable clips with which to impress editors to give them jobs in sinkholes like the *New York Times*. I know the spirit of rebellion still seethes in Conn's breast, as I feel sure it does in that of Kayo, now the DA of San Francisco and someday perhaps, I hope, its mayor. Took me on the demo? C'mon, Conn. Kayo and I were in love with Linden, Konni Zilliacus's beautiful daughter. Where Linden wanted to go, we marched. It was ever thus. And you're wrong on the date. It was the late fifties, m'boy. Time flies. Anglo-Irish? All it means now

is Protestant, a class that effectively died many, many decades ago. But I grew up there, and you and Kayo didn't. ALEXANDER COCKBURN

THE RACE CARD & 'COLORBLINDNESS'

Windsor, Conn.

■ I wish to respectfully disagree with some of Michael Lind's comments in his review of Randall Kennedy's *Interracial Intimacies* and my book *Race Mixing* ["Far From Heaven," June 16]. I have no quarrel with what Lind says about my book (other than to note that it focuses on black-white marriage since 1940, not since the colonial period). However, Lind argues that the only way to eliminate the vestiges of caste in the United States is for the federal government to stop recognizing race in its public actions. I do not agree that the main racial problem is that "there are still bigots in America," or that abandoning the idea of race will lead to the end of structural racism or institutionalized white privilege. By focusing on race as an issue of individual discrimination, the current emphasis on "colorblindness" makes it more difficult to challenge collective white privilege and to deal with the ways racial inequalities are naturalized in the law. Lind asserts that race-based social programs should be abandoned in favor of politically more palatable need-based programs, but unless we recognize the continued power of race in this society, we will never be able to address how need-based programs like welfare have been successfully attacked using the race card.

In *Race Mixing*, I insist that interracial marriage is not a solution to America's racial problems. Although the number of black-white couples has increased in the past sixty years, it is naïve to think that these relationships can undo centuries of racial domination.

RENEE ROMANO

Sacramento, Calif.

■ I want to praise Michael Lind for calling attention to a public policy issue that is of profound interest to me—namely, the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of government categorization by "race" and ethnicity. This is a crude, primitive and often cruel system of dividing human beings, often even parents from their children.

I am the sponsor of a ballot initiative in California, loosely known as the Racial Privacy Initiative, that seeks to clip the wings of the government's ability to classify, sort and categorize its citizens. Predictably, but to my great disappointment, "progressives" are my principal foes. I never thought I would see the day when liberals would defend racial classifications, as if somehow race were a biological and fixed reality.

WARD CONNERLY

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EDITORIALS

End the US Occupation

The test of a great nation is whether it has the capacity to own up to its mistakes and change course for the sake of the country and the world. The Johnson and Nixon administrations failed this test in Vietnam, prolonging an unwinnable war that cost millions of lives while weakening America at home and abroad. The Bush Administration likewise shows no sign of facing up to its errors in Iraq. As US casualties mount (thirty-four deaths since George W. Bush declared combat over on May 1) and the financial costs of the occupation grow (Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's latest estimate is \$3.9 billion a month for the military costs alone), the Administration seems more concerned with preserving its postwar imperial position than with creating a stable and democratic Iraq. The result has been a badly bungled occupation and an increasingly embittered Iraqi population that blames the United States for the lack of progress on everything from the disruption of basic services, to the continued civil disorder, to the slow movement on giving Iraqis a real say in their future.

It is time for the White House to acknowledge that it made a profound strategic mistake in waging war in Iraq without the support of the international community, and that the United States and its small band of allies do not have the resources, expertise or legitimacy to stabilize Iraq, let alone establish the conditions for an Iraqi democracy. It is also time for the White House to request that the United Nations take over primary responsibility in Iraq as the only way of accomplishing this goal.

Faced with some tough questions from members of Congress,

Administration officials did acknowledge recently that they underestimated both the cost and security dangers of the postwar occupation. But they seem to believe that their belated efforts to establish an Iraqi Governing Council and to woo international "help," together with a more aggressive response to guerrilla attacks, will be enough to keep the sinking ship afloat. Again, as in their initial calculations, they are likely to be mistaken.

Take the most basic issue, security. Rumsfeld attributes the security dangers in Iraq to a few Baathist "dead-enders," along with some foreign elements trying to embarrass the United States. But that description underestimates not only the extent of the resistance but its causes. Opponents to the US presence also include many Shiite clerics and their followers, and even among secular-leaning Iraqis the United States has few active supporters.

The Administration's plans for an Iraqi police force have been plagued with problems. On July 5 a bomb in Ramadi killed seven members of the first class of US-trained police, confirming many Iraqis' fears that they will be targeted by local militias if they are seen as cooperating with the Americans. Meanwhile, efforts to secure international forces to augment and replace overstretched US troops have had little more success. India has just announced that it is turning down a US request for 17,000 troops, on the grounds that it could not make such a commitment without a UN mandate. Likewise, no Arab country will commit any sizable contingent unless it is to a UN force—nor will countries like France or Russia, which opposed the war in the first place. And countries like Poland that are willing to send troops are unlikely to do so for any length of time without the financial compensation that a UN peacekeeping framework provides.

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The only way for the White House to rectify its mistake would be to turn over the postwar administration of Iraq to the UN, which despite its limitations is in a better position to pull together the forces and expertise required for the long-term project of establishing self-government in Iraq. This is not an argument for the United States to abandon its responsibilities in Iraq. But Washington must face the fact that we cannot fulfill those responsibilities as long as we are seen as an occupying power that lacks the full support of the Iraqi people and the international community.

The Administration will continue to deny what it has created in Iraq. Therefore not only Democratic and Republican elected officials but all concerned citizens must demand that the White House change course. Shifting public sentiment offers an opening: A late June Gallup poll found 42 percent of Americans now believe things are going badly in Iraq, up from 29 percent in early June. At the same time, a June PIPA/Knowledge Networks poll found that 64 percent of Americans wanted the UN to take the lead in building a democratic government in Iraq, up from 50 percent in April. Reflecting that desire, Senator Edward Kennedy, in a July 15 interview, urged the White House to give up its "arrogant" attitude and "bring in the international community" in Iraq. To raise tough questions about the Bush Administration's handling of Iraq is not partisan politics—it's the test of a strong democracy. Without those questions, Bush's illegal and unnecessary war will become an even greater tragedy, for America and for the people of Iraq.

COMMENT

Showtime in Iraq

Baghdad

When the new Governing Council of Iraq was announced in Baghdad Sunday afternoon, July 13, it was greeted as mis-, dis- or virtual information. It either belies, masks or predicts the real power in the country. This "interim administration," as the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority describes it, will presumably now set about defining the shape and character of a new Iraqi government.

Meanwhile, the shape and character of the American footprint in this conquered land grew a little smudged, which was the whole idea. Cosmetically, diplomatically or wisely, the American viceroy, Paul Bremer, did not make the announcement naming the Iraqi council himself but let the job fall to a United Nations special representative. With the twenty-five members of the Governing Council seated in a semicircle on the stage of the Convention Center, an auditorium that wouldn't be out of place at Lincoln Center but has better acoustics, the UN's Sergio Vieira de Mello called the occasion one of those "defining moments in history." The Convention Center, which seats more than 2,000, was about one-quarter filled with wanded and patted-down press and interested foreigners as well as carefully screened approving Iraqis. Bremer himself was positioned in the front row, flanked by a security detachment that would do honor to a Latin *caudillo*, looking enameled and pleased.

A number of the new members of the Governing Council made

COMMENT

statements about their hopes for imminent self-government, dutifully translated from the stage. Some wore tribal headdress, others business suits; one of the women was veiled, while the other two wore conservative outfits. Despite complaints that many of the new Governing Council members had sat out the Saddam Hussein years in exile, the only one who didn't look indigenously Iraqi was Ahmad Chalabi, who dressed as the Washington lobbyist he is.

The questions from the floor that followed the presentation of the interim administration were not really questions at all but statements reflecting opinions in the auditorium. An Iraqi woman arose to say, in Arabic, "Thank you, United States," after which she shouted "Long live Bush!" three times. A man stated that the Governing Council "is the first authority that has any legitimacy, because it reflects the spectrum of Iraqi society and should win Arab League support." A European woman asked whether the Iraqis would really have any power or if the real power remained with the Americans. The question of the day, of course. A member of the Governing Council replied that this was an evolving process. The answer of the day. Then an angry Irish member of a peace group pretty much concluded the occasion by asking how the United States could be trusted to keep its word on anything when it is responsible for the scourge of "Iraqi blood... cheapened to the point where it is seen as expendable." She might have been in Belfast.

Bremer's British deputy, John Sawers, gave a brief interview to a few reporters in which he defended the representativeness of the Governing Council by pointing out that it included the leaders of Iraq's fourteen political parties. When asked why there weren't more women on the council, he had a ready stat at hand: "The United States Congress has 14 percent women, and this council has 12 percent. This is double the representation of women in the government of any Arab country. Increasingly the well-educated women will assert themselves. Look, this isn't perfect, but it is a representative body, and elections will come." I asked what the next step is, and who will take it. "The council will set in motion the process of drafting a constitution. The coalition has its responsibilities, and the Governing Council has its own responsibilities." Neither the Delphic oracle nor Tony Blair, aficionados of ambiguity in the ancient and modern worlds, could have put it better.

Opinions in the street were mixed. A 22-year-old GI from Ohio on patrol along a Baghdad boulevard said, "I guess this is going to be pretty much a puppet group, right?" An Iraqi intellectual, recently returned from thirty-four years in exile, said hopefully, "This is the first thing the Americans have done right." An unemployed Iraqi journalist said he was dubious: "Let's see deeds, not words." The councilmembers themselves were impressive enough, except for Chalabi, and appeared earnest and determined. I allowed myself to wonder whether the coalition and Iraq itself might possibly have turned a corner—or was this simply a show?

The following day, in an interview at a coalition office, I was told that Bremer had been heard to remark in his morning staff meeting that he "absolutely could not believe" what the Irish woman said about the cheapness of Iraqi blood to Americans. I was just thinking I might have to upgrade the description of Bremer from simply enameled to the look of enameled arrogance attributed to Lord Curzon, the last Victorian viceroy of

India, when outside the office we were in, a grenade exploded, frivolously destroying the parked Audi of the Tunisian ambassador. No one was hurt.

PETER DAVIS

Peter Davis is an author and filmmaker who received an Academy Award for his Vietnam War documentary Hearts and Minds. His most recent book is If You Came This Way: A Journey Through the Lives of the Underclass (John Wiley). He is on assignment in Iraq for The Nation.

Nigergate Thuggery

I did senior Bush officials blow the cover of a US intelligence officer working covertly in a field of vital importance to national security—and break the law—in order to strike at a Bush Administration critic and intimidate others? It sure looks that way, if conservative journalist Robert Novak can be trusted. In a recent column on Nigergate, Novak examined the role of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV in the affair. On July 6 Wilson went public, writing in the *New York Times* about the trip he took to Niger in February 2002—at the request of the CIA—to check out allegations that Saddam Hussein had tried to purchase uranium from Niger for a nuclear weapons program. Wilson came home and told the CIA that it was "highly doubtful" Saddam had been able to buy uranium from Niger. (His findings were later confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency.) Reports, including Wilson's own, of his trip revved up the controversy over Bush's claim—which he made in his State of the Union address—that Iraq had attempted to obtain uranium in Africa for a nuclear weapons program. News of Wilson's mission provided more reason to suspect the Administration of misrepresenting intelligence in making its case for war on Iraq.

Soon after Wilson disclosed his trip in the media, the payback came. Novak's July 14 column contained the following sentences: "Wilson never worked for the CIA, but his wife, Valerie Plame, is an Agency operative on weapons of mass destruction. Two senior administration officials told me Wilson's wife suggested sending him to Niger to investigate."

Wilson caused problems for the White House, and his wife was outed. "I will not answer questions about my wife," he says. "This is about me and less so about my wife. It has always been about the facts underpinning the President's statement in the State of the Union speech." He will neither confirm nor deny that his wife works for the CIA. But assuming she does, that would seem to mean that the Bush Administration has screwed one of its own top-secret operatives—and compromised national security—in order to punish Wilson or to send a message to others who might dare challenge it.

The sources for Novak's assertion about Wilson's wife appear to be "two senior administration officials." That is, a pair of top Bush officials told a reporter the name of a deep-cover CIA officer who has had the dicey and difficult mission of tracking parties trying to buy or sell weapons of mass destruction or WMD material. If that's true, her career has been destroyed. Without acknowledging whether she is a CIA employee, Wilson

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says, "Naming her this way would have compromised every operation, every relationship, every network with which she had been associated in her entire career." If she is not a CIA employee and Novak is reporting accurately, then the White House has wrongly branded a woman known to friends as an energy analyst for a private firm as a CIA officer.

This is not only a possible breach of national security; it is a potential violation of law. Under the Intelligence Identities Protection Act of 1982, it is a crime for anyone with access to classified information to intentionally disclose a covert agent. The punishment is a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or up to ten years in prison. Journalists are mostly protected from prosecution. Thus, Novak need not worry.

Novak tells me he was indeed tipped off by government officials and had no reluctance about naming her. "I figured if they gave it to me," he says, "they'd give it to others." Was Wilson's wife involved in sending him off to Niger? Wilson will say only, "I was invited out to meet with a group of people at the CIA who were interested in this subject. None I knew more than casually."

So where's the investigation? Remember Filegate—and the Republican charge that the Clinton White House used privileged information against its foes? In this instance, it appears that Bush Administration officials gathered information on Wilson and his family, and then revealed classified material to lash out at him. "Stories like this," Wilson says, "are not intended to intimidate me, since I've already told my story. But it's pretty clear it is intended to intimidate others who might come forward."

Since Bush Administration officials are so devoted to protecting government secrets—such as the identity of the energy lobbyists with whom the Vice President meets—one might (theoretically) expect them to be appalled by the possibility that classified information was disclosed and national security harmed for a political hit job. Yet after the Novak column appeared, there was no immediate comment from the White House—or any other public reverberation. The Wilson smear was a thuggish act, a sign that with this gang politics trumps national security.

DAVID CORN

Bush's Africa Agenda

George W. Bush's recent tour of Africa was a series of campaign photo opportunities dressed up as a diplomatic trip. If it were a musical, it might have been called *Compassionate Conservatism Does Africa*. But beneath the compassionate exterior, the Administration's primary interests in Africa—oil, minerals and military access—were hidden in plain sight. Not only did Bush preview his trip at a speech to the Corporate Council on Africa, but his foreign policy team is headed by Condoleezza Rice, a former board member of Chevron, a firm whose activities in Nigeria continue to draw harsh criticism from international human rights monitors and local community activists.

Try as Bush might to focus on his AIDS plan or his alleged concern for Africa's impoverished millions, press exchanges during his sojourn kept coming back to two issues—White House use of phony information about Iraq's alleged pursuit of uranium from

Africa and a possible US peacekeeping role in Liberia—that highlighted the realities of US involvement with Africa. As *New York Times* correspondent Eric Schmitt revealed in a July 5 dispatch, the Pentagon has been trolling for access to new facilities throughout Africa, seeking to expand military ties or secure basing arrangements in Djibouti, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Senegal and Uganda, for starters. These deals in the making have frequently been greased with increases in military aid. US military assistance to the continent is not dramatically higher than it was under Clinton, but it is much more sharply focused on countries that offer access to oil (Nigeria and Angola) or access to military facilities for use in the war on terrorism (Eritrea, Djibouti and Kenya).

Bush's stated willingness to allow US forces to participate in a multinational peacekeeping effort designed to drive Charles Taylor from power in Liberia would have far more resonance if his Administration were ready to pursue policies that would prevent the emergence of the next generation of Taylors. But that is hardly the case. As the President set off for Africa, the State Department announced plans to cut off military aid to nearly three dozen countries—including several on the President's itinerary, such as Botswana, Senegal and Nigeria—if they did not sign "impunity agreements" indicating that they would never refer a US citizen for prosecution to the newly operating International Criminal Court. During his visit to Washington in early June, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni—who was on Bush's African itinerary—signed such an agreement, apparently in exchange for \$200,000 in military aid. Arms were twisted and words exchanged at every stop on the President's trip to get other African nations to fall into line. South Africa was the only nation that refused to cave in to pressure from Washington.

While Bush was taking his compassionate conservative show to countries ravaged by civil wars fueled by small arms, the US delegation to a United Nations meeting on that very subject was hard at work trying to water down a plan to curb the flow of those weapons. At the first meeting on this topic in summer 2001, the Bush Administration pushed to remove a plank put forward by the African delegations calling on UN member states to avoid arming nonstate actors such as terrorists and rebel groups. The Pentagon and the CIA didn't want to give up the possibility of arming the Afghan warlords, or future UNITAS, or whoever might serve US interests in some future conflict, so the plank was removed. This year, the US approach was more subtle but no less resistant to any action to curb the flow of small arms. A key member of the US delegation was Bob Barr, former Newt Gingrich acolyte, current NRA board member and opponent of gun control on any continent.

While Bush & Co. worry about oil, terrorism and WMDs, most people in Africa struggle with the more immediate threats of AIDS, debt and conflict. Now that Bush has returned with his vacation pictures, we should demand an agenda of rebuilding, reconciliation and re-engagement with Africa based on four building blocks: a fully funded AIDS program at \$3 billion per year, with the bulk of the money going through the Global AIDS fund; a multibillion-dollar development initiative, paired with a moratorium on Africa's illegitimate debt; full participation in efforts to curb the transfer of small arms to African conflict zones; support

COMMENT

for UN initiatives to broker peace agreements and put well-funded peacekeepers in Africa's major conflict zones, from Liberia to Congo; and an initiative to strengthen civil society and the media to serve as watchdogs on undemocratic governments and international institutions operating in Africa.

This is a substantial agenda, but if we don't start making demands now, we will end up ten years hence applauding yet another US President for the simple act of setting foot in Africa. It's time to start setting higher standards.

EMIRA WOODS AND WILLIAM D. HARTUNG

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GM 'Assistance' for Africa

Harare, Zimbabwe

In late June, George W. Bush spoke of Africa as a famine-stricken continent where the people are unable to grow enough food for themselves. According to the President, African farmers need biotechnology—and therefore should give a warm welcome to GM (genetically modified) seeds and foods supplied by US agribusiness. (These announcements coincided with the US decision to proceed with a World Trade Organization suit against the European Union on genetically modified foods.)

Bush's assumptions are not accurate. Of course, some Africans are starving and many are chronically poor, sick and hungry. But most Africans manage well in a difficult situation—growing crops that are adapted to their environment, with limited technology. Africans need many things to improve their lives—but biotech agriculture is not one of them. This was the message I delivered on Capitol Hill and elsewhere when I visited the United States recently at the invitation of consumer and environmental groups.

So why is the Bush Administration so keen to push biotechnology into Africa? There are obviously domestic factors (such as agribusiness contributions to US political campaigns) but in Africa we see two principal reasons:

§ *"Development assistance" for US farmers.* In 2002, when a severe food crisis hit southern Africa, affecting 14 million people, the US government offered food relief in the form of surplus GM grains. Malawi, Swaziland, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Mozambique accepted either unmilled or milled GM corn. Zambia—with 2.4 million people in need—rejected the GM corn, citing the absence of conclusive information on the long-term health effects and the likely impact on Zambia's food production, environment and trade. The US government then refused to supply Zambia with non-GM maize or to untie its aid, which was to be given only in kind.

The insistence on using GM corn as food aid rather than giving untied funds illustrates that "development assistance" is aimed at US farmers rather than African needs. Unable to sell GM crops in the wider market, the United States prefers to subsidize surplus

output as "food relief." Incidentally, the drought in southern Africa has now broken and Zambia is doing well, having harvested bumper crops this year.

§ *Creating new markets and business opportunities.* Establishing biotechnology in Africa will create new markets for seeds and associated items produced by huge US-based agribusinesses. The new African Agricultural Technology Foundation, supported by USAID, the Rockefeller Foundation and Monsanto, says that it will donate patent rights, seed varieties and laboratory know-how free to African scientists. The funders claim their support is altruistic while acknowledging that they hope for new markets in Africa.

GM seed varieties have been of marginal benefit to American farmers, so they are likely to be even less beneficial in Africa, where around 70 percent of farmers are small-scale producers, saving seed from year to year. Meanwhile, African scientists, such as the West African Rice Development Association, are developing their own new seed varieties, like New Rice for Africa (NERICA), and solving other agricultural problems, cheaply and safely.

Although North Americans have been eating GM foods for years, even with a well-funded scientific establishment the United States has not been able to test or measure their impact. There is no research on the potential health consequences of biotechnology in Africa, where grains are a major part of people's diet and where regulatory testing regimes are still in their infancy. African consumers have the same basic rights as American consumers: the right to information, to safety and to redress for harm. Although few Africans fully understand the implications of the new GM products, many feel that they will have far-reaching impacts.

The challenge for African governments is to regulate and control the introduction of GM food and to adopt high standards of safety for GM products. In May 2001 the African Union—the pan-continental organization of African governments—brought together eighty-nine scientists, lawyers and other specialists to discuss ways to set up an Africa-wide biosafety system. The meeting later developed the African Model Law on Biosafety

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The International Solidarity Movement's second Freedom Summer has begun, and much has changed since our last: the war on Iraq; the much-hyped road map; full-blown construction on what Palestinians have come to call the Apartheid Wall. Sadly, though, much remains the same: the continuing deterioration of the lives of Palestinians, with poverty and health crises in a crescendo. The ISM itself is in a far more precarious position. This year, volunteers signed up knowing that one ISMer was killed, that others have been shot, expelled or detained.... And still people from all over the world have come, in record numbers, to volunteer." For Adam Shapiro's full report go to www.thenation.com. Also: Jason Vest on DEA appointee Karen Tandy and Lizzy Ratner on the unlearned lessons of Guantánamo detainment camps.

in Biotechnology, which was part of the agenda at the African Union summit in Mozambique just held on July 10–12.

Africa needs a genuine debate on the effects of biotech, led by Africans and concerned with African needs. Until then, we must thank President Bush for his concern with poverty and starvation in Africa but ask him to step back and allow Africans to make up their own minds on whether they want GM foods.

AMADOU KANOUTE

Amadou Kanoute is Africa regional director for Consumers International.

No Jobs=No Votes for Fox

Three years ago the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost its seventy-one-year grip on Mexico's presidency. The party was written off as an authoritarian, inward-looking dinosaur, made obsolete by the country's opening to the global economy. Mexico's new president, ex-Coca-Cola executive Vicente Fox, was both symbol and substance of this hope for a prosperous, market-based future.

The PRI is back. It won almost twenty more seats in the July 6 election for the 500-member Chamber of Deputies, Mexico's lower house. With 224 members, the PRI will be once again the largest bloc in the Mexican Congress. The leftist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) gained forty-one seats for a new total of ninety-six. Fox's right-of-center National Action Party (PAN), lost about fifty, and will be down to 153.

The election was all about the economy. During his presidential campaign Fox promised voters that the Mexican economy would grow at the rate of 7 percent a year throughout his six-year term. But since passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mexico's growth has depended on exporting to a robust US market, which started to slump shortly after he took office. Now, midway through his term, the country's growth has averaged less than 1 percent. Add to the political equation the more than 200,000 jobs that have been lost to lower-wage China, and the fury of small farmers being blown away by the post-NAFTA invasion of their markets by US and Canadian agribusiness, and

you are left with a large number of unhappy voters.

Having failed to produce jobs, Fox had hoped for a deal with George W. Bush that would make it easier for Mexico's unemployed to migrate north. Bush, whose business constituency was eager to increase the pool of low-wage labor, and who shared Fox's conservative values, seemed interested. But after 9/11, the notion of further opening up the border was a political nonstarter.

Abandoned by Bush, Fox made a last, desperate effort to repair the PAN's fortunes by showing his independence from Washington. He refused to use Mexico's Security Council vote to support Bush's Iraq adventure. But although an overwhelming majority of Mexicans opposed the war, support for Fox's foreign policy was trumped by anger over the empty lunchpail.

The charming and charismatic Fox is still well liked and gets credit for being personally honest. But as one voter told the *New York Times*, "The people still live with the same corruption. When we were with the PRI, we knew they robbed us. But at least there were more jobs. We lived better."

The defeat of the PAN reflects the way Mexico's neoliberalism has tended to devour its own. Former President Carlos Salinas—the Harvard-trained economist who in the early 1990s elbowed aside the old PRI dinosaurs and talked his country into NAFTA—is the most despised political figure in modern Mexican history. His successor, Ernesto Zedillo, is finished; he presided over the mid-'90s peso crisis and is widely blamed by the party rank and file for its 2000 disaster. Now Fox, who vanquished the PRI, has been betrayed by his own naïve faith in *laissez-faire*.

All this should be good news for a resurgent PRD, which has been crippled by internecine war for a decade. The party's leading officeholder, Manuel Lopez Obrador, Mexico City's mayor, has become the country's most popular politician by creating jobs with public works and by providing assistance to the elderly. He may be Mexico's version of Brazil's President Lula and would certainly be the favorite if the election were held today. Unfortunately, Obrador's prospects will be limited by the PRD's narrow base, concentrated in Mexico City and a few of the poorest states.

Moreover, like the left in the rest of North America, the PRD may be increasingly disadvantaged as elections become more Americanized—that is, more costly, more dependent on business contributions and less appealing to the average citizen. Already the American disease of low voter participation seems to have seeped across the border; turnout in congressional elections has fallen from 61 percent in 1991 to 41 percent this July. And the competition for money is becoming a political issue itself. The Fox Administration is currently under investigation for allegedly taking illegal campaign contributions from the United States. A few days before the election, the former Mexican ambassador to Cuba charged that Miami Cuban-Americans had helped finance the Fox campaign in 2000, which he suggested could explain Fox's reversal of Mexico's traditional friendliness toward Cuba.

Whatever the truth of these specific allegations, we should not be surprised if NAFTA's common market for goods and money is also creating a common market for politicians.

JEFF FAUX

Jeff Faux was the founding president, and is currently Distinguished Fellow, of the Economic Policy Institute.

CALVIN TRILLIN

THE TRUTH EMERGES, SORT OF

Aha! So Tenet is the guy
Responsible for Bush's lie
About the Niger A-bomb deal
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The Niger lie's off Tenet's chest.
So who's to blame for all the rest?

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Imposing Our Will

The United States seems to interpret the news these days through a prism of catch phrases borrowed from history. Once, the phrases of the Second World War—"Munich," "appeasement" and so forth—were applied to the Vietnam War, with calamitous results. Now, the catch phrases of the Vietnam War are being pressed into service to describe the war on Iraq: "search and destroy," "quagmire," "winning hearts and minds," "the Baghdad triangle." Because I began my life as a journalist in the latter's namesake—the "iron triangle," a center of resistance near Saigon—I'm perhaps more likely than most to see any American war as "another Vietnam"; but for the same reason I recognize a need to hold the Vietnam-Iraq comparison up to scrutiny. The differences between the two conflicts are large and obvious. In Vietnam, America's enemy had powerful rear-guard support—in the first place, uninvaded North Vietnam; in the second place, the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, an acknowledged superpower. Today, the Iraqi resistance has no proven state support, and the United States is the world's "sole superpower." (The rear-area support that is likely to appear over time is international Islamic terrorism—a very significant force but hardly equal to China or the Soviet Union.) In Vietnam, the resistance forces had a half-century of continuous experience fighting colonial occupiers—first the French then the Japanese, then the French again and only last the Americans. Iraq, on the other hand, was an independent country when attacked by the United States. In Vietnam, national consciousness has roots that extend back hundreds of years. Iraq was cobbled together by the British in 1920. The Vietnamese resistance was Communist, but the Iraqi resistance is of unknown political complexion and seems to combine many elements. The Vietnam War was fought to stop the spread of Communism; the war on Iraq was allegedly fought to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

But the similarities are equally obvious, and becoming more so every day. As in Vietnam, conventional American forces in Iraq face guerrilla resistance. As in Vietnam, an end to the Iraq war—a successful "exit strategy," to use the post-Vietnam catch phrase—depends on setting up a regime that can stand on its own and be acceptable to the United States. As in Vietnam, military forces have thus been given an essentially political task. As in Vietnam, political events will be more important than military ones. The politics in question are American and Iraqi. In America, the question is how long the public will endure a steady stream of casualties and expenditures. (Already, polls are showing a sharp drop in public support for the war.) In Iraq, the fundamental question is whether the Iraqi people will accept or reject a US-founded regime. The outcome of the war will depend above all on the wills of the two peoples and their interaction. The more Iraqis hate and resist the occupation, the more Americans are likely to grow tired and force an end to the war, as they did in Vietnam.

The outlook for success is doubtful, and the reasons go deep into history. They are ones that we Americans, of all people, should well understand. We have recently celebrated the Fourth of July, the day we announced our claim "to assume among the

Powers of the Earth the separate and equal Station to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them." Arguably, the modern principle of national self-determination was born at that moment. Since then, almost every nation in the world has pursued the same path, with the result that the great empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from the British to the Soviet, have been dispatched to history's ash heap. The passion for independence from colonial rule, which Leonard Woolf called "the world revolt," has proved universal and, what is more surprising, has been all but universally successful. Is Iraq destined to be an exception—a country that, having achieved its independence, now gives it up again to a foreign power?

Not all the differences between Vietnam and Iraq, moreover, are favorable to the United States. For one thing, the stated goal of the war—finding weapons of mass destruction—has melted away. The short war to save America from nuclear destruction has turned into a long war with no clear purpose. For another thing, whereas in Vietnam the United States intervened in support of an existing government, in Iraq it intervened to overthrow a government. True, the government in South Vietnam depended wholly on American money and military power for its survival and had almost no independent source of strength in its own society. Still, it did have the signal, underappreciated virtue of *existing*: It employed thousands of people, delivered the mail, picked up the garbage. In Iraq there is no such creature. It's not for nothing that conquerors set up quivering regimes. The Administration that promised "regime change" delivered only regime smash. In a colossal omission, it forgot that Iraq would after all have to have some sort of government or other.

This is something new. The American combat forces, who had been told that the road home goes "through Baghdad" were hastily enlisted to fill the political deficit. They found themselves trying to repair electrical lines, govern towns, guard banks. But immediately Iraqis, who quickly proved not to be missing the self-determination gene, turned against them, and some began to attack them. A new American administrator, L. Paul Bremer, was brought in to impose a new, tough policy. In his words, "We dominate the scene and we will continue to impose our will on this country." When this strategy, so drastically at odds with any idea of democracy or self-determination, appeared to backfire, Bremer reversed course and decided to appoint the "Governing Council" of Iraq that has just come into existence. Now he seeks to perform a miracle even more remarkable than any that was required in Vietnam—to create out of thin air a regime that will do America's will without the presence of American forces. Today, people are asking how long the United States "will have to stay" until success is achieved, but this masks the more important question of whether the mission is possible at all. The real question may be how long the United States can bear to stay before failure is accepted. In Vietnam, it took more than a decade.

Jonathan Schell, the Harold Willens Peace Fellow of the Nation Institute, is the author of the just-published The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People (Metropolitan).

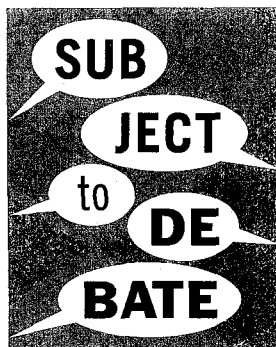
KATHA POLLITT

For Whom the Poll Tolls

PRO-LIFE WOMEN SHIFT TO MAJORITY, trumpets the *Washington Times*. Other concerns come in “way ahead of preserving abortion rights,” *USA Today* declares. “Progress and Perils,” the latest poll commissioned by Faye Wattleton’s Center for the Advancement of Women (CAW), had social conservatives dancing in the streets, and no wonder: Fifty-one percent of women, it claims, now favor banning abortion completely or restricting it to cases of rape, incest or to save a woman’s life. Only 41 percent of women think abortion rights should be “a top priority” of the women’s movement—and only 3 percent think it should be *the* top priority. That Wattleton, former head of Planned Parenthood and icon of feminism, should be the bearer of this news is the icing on the anti-choice cake.

The abortion responses have predictably attracted most of the media attention, but social conservatives shouldn’t break out the champagne. The poll shows strong support for a wide variety of feminist goals. If I were the Independent Women’s Forum, I wouldn’t be thrilled to learn that large majorities of women nominated as “a top priority” for the women’s movement domestic violence and sexual assault (92 percent), equal pay for equal work (90 percent), childcare (85 percent), women’s healthcare (83 percent), sexual harassment (71 percent) and electing more women to political office (61 percent). Aren’t we always being told that violence against women is hyped, that sexual harassment is political correctness run amok, that women already get equal pay for the equal work they don’t really want to be doing, that they’re insulted by the very thought that they might vote for a woman on gender grounds and that far from wanting childcare they’d like to stay home? That 62 percent say we “need a strong women’s movement” is not easy to reconcile with the right-wing mantra that feminism is outdated and irrelevant. The high percentages of blacks (63) and Latinas (68) who see the need for a women’s movement contradicts the stereotype that women’s rights are a white woman’s thing.

Like all polls, “Progress and Perils” should be read with a skeptical eye. It’s based on two telephone surveys, one of 2,329 women taken between December 9, 2000, and January 21, 2001, and one of 1,000 women taken between December 17, 2002 and January 2. You could argue that the very act of conducting a lengthy poll by telephone skews the response pool. What sort of person bares her soul to pollsters for upward of an hour—and during the holiday season yet? The sort of person, apparently, who has never heard of *Roe v. Wade*, which only 43 percent could identify. Respondents were slightly poorer than the national average, and more likely to be married (56 percent versus 52 percent); wives tend to be more conservative than single women. Most controversial, 45 percent identified themselves as “born-again or Evangelical Christian,” in line with the Gallup poll but substantially higher than some others (a July 2001 ABC poll came up with 37 percent). Perhaps an overrepresentation of marrieds and born-again helps explain the abortion responses, which are on the anti-choice end of the current spectrum of polls. Do 51 percent of women really favor



outlawing the vast majority of abortions—including those performed to preserve the mother’s health, or in cases of severely damaged fetuses, circumstances that in other polls evoke pro-choice majorities, but that were not mentioned here? How about when the “woman” is 12 years old? It is hard to believe women are really so cruel and rigid—after all, approximately four in ten women have had abortions (and 20 percent of abortion recipients are born-again). Countless women have helped others through abortion crises. One wonders why the pollsters offered such

stark and minimal choices. Why not ask, as the journalist Cynthia Cooper suggested in an e-mail to the History in Action feminist list, whether women should be forced to bear a child against their will? Why not see if women realize that a rape victim who didn’t promptly report the crime to the police could not make use of a rape exception? Why not find out what women actually know about abortion law and access? Interestingly, when the pollsters told women what affirmative action was, support for it went up.

In line with numerous polls that show stagnant or slightly declining support for abortion rights, the numbers got worse between the 2001 and 2003 surveys. Yet other polls from January 2003 showed much more support for abortion rights—an NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll found 59 percent agreeing that abortion should be left up to a woman and her doctor, up from 57 percent in 1990. In an ABC/*Washington Post* poll, 57 percent agreed abortion should be legal in all or most cases; 56 percent said it should be as easy as now to get an abortion, or easier. A Gallup poll had 53 percent saying *Roe* was a good thing—versus only 30 percent saying it was a bad thing.

Polls are not known for their internal consistency, but even by the lax standards of phone polls the CAW poll is a little strange. For example, 41 percent named abortion as “a top priority” for the women’s movement—11 percentage points more than thought it should be generally available! And 27 percent named it as a lower priority—put that together with the 51 percent who say they oppose legal abortion all or almost all the time, and you have at least 19 percent who oppose abortion but think abortion rights should be a priority of the women’s movement. Come again? The low priority that respondents think abortion should have in the women’s movement reflects the answers of women who oppose the women’s movement—which is a bit like asking the Pope what the rabbi should preach.

Still, whatever its flaws, “Progress and Perils” is a much needed summons to the pro-choice and feminist movements. We’ve concentrated on lobbying and judge-watching and clinic defense (as well as the actual provision of women’s reproductive health services, which the anti-choicers don’t bother with)—vital, necessary work. But we’ve let the grassroots education and activism slide. “You have to win the hearts and minds of the people,” Wattleton told me. “And that takes place in the public arena.” The anti-choicers have been all over that arena for years. “Progress and Perils” shows how effective they’ve been. ■

ERIC ALTERMAN

'Lyndon B. Bush'?

At some point, something had to give. Yes, much of the mainstream media treated George W. Bush with Lewinsky-like devotion, but could it really go on forever? The Bush people seemed to think it could, and in their hubris lies their demise.

It was an amazing run. They won the presidency by losing an election. They bankrupted the treasury, trashed the environment, turned the nation's system of justice over to religious fanatics and, finally, deceived the nation into an unprovoked war. They probably would have gotten away with that too, except they forgot to make any sensible plans about how to run the place afterward. ("Dude, where's my 'coalition'?") In the ensuing chaos and guerrilla warfare against the vulnerable and undermanned US forces, well, somebody was bound to start asking questions.

Why did we invade Iraq again? Was it because they were "re-constituting" nuclear weapons? Nope, they made that one up. Was it because they were in possession of weapons of mass destruction? Apparently not. Was it because they were in league with the Al Qaeda terrorists who attacked us on 9/11? Sorry, ix-nay on the evidence-nay. Did we do it to further the cause of democracy and human rights? Stop, you're hurting my tummy.

Yet every one of these bogus justifications was trumpeted in the mainstream media during the run-up to the war. The Administration exploited its sympathetic interlocutors so effectively that it actually increased people's ignorance. For instance, a January poll found that 44 percent of respondents said they thought "most" or "some" of the 9/11 hijackers were Iraqi citizens. Only 17 percent of those polled were aware that none of them were. The answer shocked pollsters, as almost nobody had given the answer "Iraqi" in the aftermath of the attack. Moreover, a full 41 percent of those questioned believed that Iraq had already obtained the nuclear weapons the Administration claimed it was pursuing. As Carroll Doherty, editor of the Pew Research Center, told *Editor and Publisher's* Ari Berman, "There's almost nothing the public doesn't believe about Saddam Hussein."

When the Niger nuclear scandal finally began to break, the Administration tried its usual program of stonewalling by a combination of tough talk and incoherent assertion. The phony story, which was not merely included in Bush's State of the Union speech but also, despite carefully worded denials, in Tenet's classified briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, helped convince many fence-sitters to commit to war. But the story was easily identifiable as nonsense by any professional who cared to examine the evidence. Even without Joseph Wilson's now famous mission, Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the IAEA, told the UN Security Council that he knew almost immediately that the documents were phony. Dick Cheney, who was reportedly briefed on Wilson's findings, tried to smear ElBaradei. Sans evidence, he announced on *Meet the Press* in March, "I think Mr. ElBaradei frankly is wrong." Cheney continued, "I think, if you look at the track record of the International Atomic Energy Agency and this

**STOP THE
PRESSES**



kind of issue, especially where Iraq's concerned, they have consistently underestimated or missed what it was Saddam Hussein was doing. I don't have any reason to believe they're any more valid this time than they've been in the past."

In fact, a senior IAEA official told Seymour Hersh, "These documents are so bad that I cannot imagine that they came from a serious intelligence agency." Indeed, one of the letters was signed with the name of a Niger minister of foreign affairs who had been out of office for more than a decade.

Another letter, allegedly from Niger's president, was so rife with obvious inaccuracies that the same IAEA official observed that its counterfeit character "could be spotted by someone using Google on the Internet."

A White House spokesman admitted in June that "some documents detailing a transaction between Iraq and Niger were forged and we no longer give them credence," but the White House continued to argue that the Niger documents constituted "only one piece of evidence in a larger body of evidence suggesting Iraq attempted to purchase uranium from Africa." Yet no one in the Administration has ever come forward to present this "larger body of evidence" to Congress or the American people.

Until George Tenet, the only high-level holdover from the Clinton Administration still working for Bush, was chosen as the fall guy, Donald Rumsfeld actually claimed to be unaware of the entire controversy. (Someone should find some room in the Pentagon's \$390 billion budget for a subscription to *The New Yorker*, so the Defense Secretary can read Sy Hersh.) Even after the scandal broke, Rice and Rumsfeld appeared on the Sunday talk shows to defend Bush's deception as "technically accurate"—given the British misinformation. In fact, it wasn't even that, but so what? This is the standard by which America is taken to war?

The Bush team still has its media apologists, of course. Bob Woodward, who serves as the Administration's unofficial autobiographer, took to the Larry King program to pooh-pooh the whole thing as just "one little piece of thousands of pieces that get sifted when they put something like this together." (Now do you wonder why they turn the secret NSC notes over to this guy?) Meanwhile, Ari Fleischer's personal flack, the *Washington Post's* Howie Kurtz, tried to blame the entire outcry on "the left," as in: "The left is now up in arms about one sentence in George Bush's last State of the Union speech." (Just "one sentence." Just one war. Just how silly can we leftists be?)

But the elements of a rapid fall are all in place. Like Lyndon Johnson during the Gulf of Tonkin, Bush may not have known he was lying at the time. Yet his entire Administration's policy was created to give him the answers he wanted, true or not. Now Tenet is under the gun. Next will be Powell. After that, maybe Rummy against Rice. Meanwhile, public approval of the President fell nine points in eighteen days, exactly mirroring the fall in support for his handling of Iraq.

The truth will set us free.

ARTICLES

THE NEW MOVEMENT

by ANDREW BOYD

The Battle in Seattle brought to the world's attention a new global resistance movement that was not only made possible by the Internet but, as Naomi Klein has deftly pointed out, was shaped in its image. Sharing the Internet's architecture of interconnected hubs and spokes, the new movement was a coalition of coalitions, a decentralized network of campaigns "intricately and tightly linked to one another."

The net allows large mobilizations to unfold with minimal bureaucracy and hierarchy. "Forced consensus and labored manifestoes are fading into the background," Klein wrote in 2000, "replaced instead by a culture of constant, loosely structured, and sometimes compulsive information-swapping."

But if Seattle was the birth of this new kind of organizing, last February 15's global peace demonstration marked its coming of age. That day, some 400,000 people turned out onto the streets of New York to protest Bush's impending war on Iraq, and close to 10 million more turned out in cities across the globe. It was arguably the single largest day of protest in world history; the *New York Times* dubbed its participants "the other superpower."

The day sent a clear message about the grassroots organizing power of the net: It enabled the antiwar movement to turn out its base quickly and cheaply, do an end run around corporate-controlled media and reach into the politically disaffected American

mainstream. The coming months and years will test how deeply the new movement can tap this potential, and to what extent "nets roots" organizing will be adopted by more established political players, liberal and conservative alike.

Given this deepening embrace of the net by movement culture, it is fitting that the website of United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), the national coalition at the heart of the February 15 protest, not only anchored the massive mobilization but preceded the existence of the organization and helped it to coalesce. In December, UFPJ did not have an office or a paid staff. The website, however, was already a one-stop shop for the many disparate strands of the peace movement. Launched the previous October, it was getting hundreds of thousands of hits a day.

"At the beginning, we had almost no money, not even enough to do a major mailing," says L.A. Kauffman, a staff organizer for UFPJ. The Internet allowed UFPJ to start serious organizing with only \$5,000 to \$10,000. "We pulled off a demo in five weeks that would normally take five or six months," she says.

Providing one place for UFPJ's hundreds of member organizations to list their actions and report their activities, the website quickly became an antiwar hub. Organizers put campaign materials and action kits online, and 15,000 copies of the February 15 flier were downloaded. People could easily find and plug into local

peace activities in their towns or states, and time local events to coordinate with broader efforts. In the end, 793 protests happened around the world on that day, including more than 200 across the United States and Canada, with paid organizers put to work only on the biggest, in New York. All the others were self-organized by UFPJ affiliates—local church, labor and peace groups who used the website to facilitate their own coordination.

When I asked Leda Dederich, UFPJ's web director, where her organization would be without the Internet, she said, "Mostly, we wouldn't be."

A follow-up demonstration, on March 16, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, was even more a creature of the web. A wave of candlelight vigils, following the dusk west across the Earth, involved an estimated 1 million people in more than 6,000 gatherings in 130 countries and every state in the nation. This global action was put together in even less time—six days—by an organization with only five staff people, MoveOn. What MoveOn did have was a nearly 1.5-million-person e-mail list and a piece of web software known as "the meeting tool."

The meeting tool allows anyone anywhere to propose a meeting time and place in his or her own neighborhood—and makes it easy for others to sign up. The day before that Sunday in March, I went to the MoveOn website, entered my ZIP code and learned that three vigils had been scheduled in my neighborhood of Park Slope, Brooklyn, including one outside the apartment of prowar Senator Chuck Schumer. The website told me how many of my neighbors had signed up for each. It was already well into the hundreds, and I made it one more.

That Sunday evening, I joined 1,500 of my neighbors. Someone handed me a candle and lit it for me; at some point a rabbi and a pastor spoke to the crowd. But otherwise, there was no obvious leadership, and it didn't seem to matter. There had been no meetings, no leaflets, no clipboards, no phone calls—we were all there, essentially, because of an e-mail we trusted.

The global vigils were but one of a string of Internet-enabled antiwar actions facilitated by UFPJ and MoveOn. MoveOn itself was founded well before the war, or even Bush's presidency, as an effort during Bill Clinton's impeachment to push Congress to censure the President and "move on." The petition went viral, gathering half a million signatures in a few weeks. After that, the group used its list to raise money for progressive Democrats, and by the time Bush was threatening war, MoveOn had become a well-oiled machine. The group raised millions of dollars online to run national TV spots and print ads, delivered a petition of 1 million signatures to the UN Security Council and got 200,000 people to call Washington on a single day. MoveOn facilitated leafleting efforts in cities and small towns across the country and coordinated volunteer-led accountability sessions with almost every member of Congress. None of this stopped the war, but it did help put antiwar sentiment squarely on the political map—

and made the case for how powerful the net can be in mobilizing social protest.

"You could say that MoveOn has a postmodern organizing model," says Eli Pariser, the organization's 22-year-old campaigns director. "It's opt-in, it's decentralized, you do it from your home." MoveOn makes it easy for people to participate or not with each solicitation—an approach that embraces the permission-based culture of the Internet, and consumer culture itself. "If Nike hadn't already taken it," Pariser says, "our motto would be 'Just Do It.'" MoveOn has set the threshold for involvement so low that it has provoked skepticism among some activists—and jokes on *The Daily Show*. Nevertheless, this organizing model has allowed MoveOn to play an important role as a campaign aggregator—inviting people in on one issue—say, the war—and then introducing them to additional issues, from Bush's tax plan to the deregulation of media ownership. "We're helping to overcome the single-issue balkanization of the progressive movement," Pariser says.

By now, many well-funded advocacy groups (Common Cause, Environmental Defense) have developed e-mail lists topping 100,000, which they typically use to run traditional, tightly controlled campaigns, using e-mail as they would direct mail

or a phone bank to mobilize their base to lobby legislators. Within the more radical global justice movement, on the other hand, there are a multitude of resource-poor

It's opt-in, it's decentralized, you do it from your home. If Nike hadn't already taken it, our motto would be "Just Do It."

grassroots groups whose e-mail lists are relatively small (5,000 to 50,000), but who use their websites to foster self-organizing—putting their organizing kit online and trusting their activist base to run with it. "What MoveOn has done," says Tom Matzzie, 28, the AFL-CIO's online mobilization manager, "is to bring the core elements of these two models together for the first time." MoveOn has a huge list that it carefully manages, and it also provides web tools that enable members to organize themselves. In the past eight months, as antiwar organizing exploded, their membership more than doubled, to a global total of more than 2.1 million.

A good e-mail list is not something you can buy or borrow. "Every MoveOn member comes to us with the personal endorsement of someone they trust," Pariser says. It is word-of-mouth organizing—in electronic form. E-mail is cheap, fast and easy to use, and it has made mixing the personal and the political more socially acceptable. Casually passing on a high-content message to a social acquaintance feels completely natural in a way handing someone a leaflet at a cocktail party never could.

This "tell a friend" phenomenon is key to how organizing happens on the net. It gives people who feel alienated from politics something valuable to contribute: their unique credibility within their particular circle of acquaintances. A small gesture to these friends can contribute to a massive multiplier effect. It is a grassroots answer to the corporate consolidation of media, which has enabled an overwhelmingly conservative punditry to give White House spin real political momentum, and the semblance of truth, simply through intensity of repetition.

MoveOn is often criticized from the left for not attempting to build permanent local structures or on-the-ground leadership.

Andrew Boyd (www.wanderbody.com), a lecturer at NYU, is co-chair of *Billionaires for Bush (or Gore)* and author of *The Activist Cookbook* (*United for a Fair Economy*) and *Daily Afflictions* (Norton).

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"They're great at getting new people involved, but it's not true self-organizing," says UFPJ's Dederich. The criticism is fair, but MoveOn's strength lies elsewhere, in providing a home for busy people who may not want to be part of a chapter-based organization with regular meetings. And given what MoveOn is doing—activating people on two or three different issues at a time, often for short durations as legislative targets change—it's hard to imagine a more appropriate model. By combining a nimble entrepreneurial style with a strong ethic of listening to its members—via online postings and straw polls—MoveOn has built a responsive, populist and relatively democratic virtual community.

Although MoveOn does not track member demographics, anecdotal evidence suggests that its base is disproportionately white. (Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley Braun, for example, fared poorly in the group's recent "primary.") This reflects the persevering digital divide, in which, according to a recent Pew survey, a full 24 percent of Americans are totally offline, and those who are online still tend to be younger, whiter, suburban, better-off and better educated. But defying online trends, the majority of MoveOn's active volunteers are female.

And staffers says its members are diverse in other ways, with thousands in each state, ranging in age and income.

Zack Exley, a former SEIU organizer and MoveOn's organizing director, says that the group reaches deep into politically disaffected middle-class constituencies—what he calls America's "silenced majority." Unlike the traditional left, he says, "we trust people. We don't think Americans are crazy or stupid or brainwashed or apathetic. We're not trying to drag them kicking and screaming over to our view. We know that there are millions of Americans in every community and walk of life who already know that something is terribly wrong with our country and who are as angry as we are and who are mostly just looking for a meaningful way to do something about it."

According to Pariser, most MoveOn members do not define themselves as activists. Rather, MoveOn is often their first step into political action—and what brings them to take that step is usually an e-mail message. "A lot of 'Take action now' e-mails feel like they were written by a focus-group e-newsletter robot," says Madeline Stanionis, who as a senior consultant for San Francisco-based Donordigital has developed scores of online advocacy campaigns. "MoveOn e-mails feel personal and fresh. They write from their hearts." The e-mails about the global vigil came directly from Pariser. His voice was strong yet level-headed. There were no ideological digressions. He got to the point early and kept it action-oriented. It was easy to trust.

Pariser says he crafts his messages with an eye toward taking MoveOn members on a journey, by providing a narrative that connects them to an ongoing social movement. As each campaign proceeds, short e-mail updates ("50,000 of you have already signed up...here's a typical response from a schoolteacher in New Mexico...") build excitement and a sense of community. This feedback loop is an example of how the Internet, when well used, can extend the shoulder-to-shoulder solidarity one feels on the street to fellow participants across the nation and around the globe.

Returning to the MoveOn website a couple of days after the global vigil, I was able to browse through photographs and personal commentaries from vigils all over the world—Kazakhstan, Korea and Kenya, as well as the one I attended in Park Slope. All in all, some 10,000 photographs were uploaded that week. Through the Internet we had found our way into the streets, and the streets had then found their way right back onto the Internet. Our local protest was immediately reflected back to us as part of a larger story of national and global resistance.

Now that the war on Iraq—or one phase of it—is over, last winter's intense outpouring of antiwar sentiment feels like a distant episode. The peace movement is collectively catching its breath and wondering what to do next. At a June convention in Chicago, UFPJ consolidated its far-flung coalition by forging a unifying program for a new wave of movement-building. Many in the peace movement are looking to the 2004 elections, when MoveOn's fundraising and outreach muscle—the group seeks to raise tens of millions of dollars and mobilize a million vol-

unteers—could be a factor. In a much-debated experiment in online democracy, MoveOn challenged the power of pundits and wealthy campaign donors to wield control

over the presidential nomination process, by asking its 1.5 million American members to vote on which Democratic candidate the organization should endorse. Howard Dean and Dennis Kucinich, the top two vote-getters, have both emerged as magnets for antiwar Democrats disaffected by the party's tepid opposition to Bush's extreme agenda. But Dean, who outfundraised his competitors last quarter through a torrent of small online donations, is the only one of the pair to have caught the Internet wave. His campaign manager, Joe Trippi, sees the net as the missing element that will make Dean's 2004 run a "perfect storm." (It couldn't hurt that MoveOn was a paid technical adviser to Dean's campaign, prompting charges of partiality from the Gephardt and Edwards campaigns during the MoveOn primary. Exley says other Democrats declined such assistance, but wouldn't say which ones.)

"Whether it has coalesced around the outsider candidacies of Ross Perot or Jerry Brown, grassroots disaffection and energy have always been there," Trippi says. "What's changed this time around is the maturity of the Internet as a peer-to-peer tool."

Dean enthusiasts have made great use of a free web service, meetup.com (a commercial cousin of MoveOn's meeting tool). It allows users to identify and then meet face to face with like-minded locals who might share an interest in knitting, motorcycles or, say, Howard Dean for President. Anyone who joins a meet-up can volunteer as a "host," someone who shows up a half-hour early to meet and greet. Members vote on a public venue for the get-togethers from a preapproved list in their area.

Tim Cairl, 28, a financial consultant whose only previous political involvement had been to call his Congressperson a few times when prompted by MoveOn, put himself forward as host of the Atlanta Dean meet-up when it was first coming together. In March, forty-two Dean fans crowded together in the back room of a downtown restaurant. The group was mostly white but ranged widely in age and occupation; the majority were new to

'The Internet has been an enormous boon to grassroots mobilizations. But it can't replace old-fashioned face-to-face organizing.'

political involvement of any kind. The typical attendee—upset about the war, and curious about Dean after seeing him on TV—had browsed his campaign website, and then found her way to meetup.com. “Meetup.com gets us in the same room,” Cairl says. “We have to take it from there.”

The feeling was social, almost fraternal. The agenda was simple: introductions, then, What do we like about Dean? What should we do? What the group did, given that no campaign organization yet existed in their late-primary state, was create one, appointing county leaders, scheduling tabling and showing up to local Democratic Party meetings. Subsequent meet-ups became a way to funnel new volunteers into this work; attendance grew to sixty-five in April, 150 by May, and soon meetings sprang up in cities across Georgia. Nationally, the 500 people who had signed up for Dean meet-ups in January grew to 60,000 by mid-July.

Trippi says traditional campaign structures run on a military model—from the national campaign director down to local precinct captains—are deadly for an Internet strategy. Indeed, the more typical Kerry and Edwards campaigns have only 5,600 and 1,000 members, respectively, on meetup.com. “The other campaigns see this Internet activity as chaos. They can’t control it, so they don’t want to waste time on it. We trust our members to be good representatives of their own views. Instead of trying to control the chaos, we feed it and give it a little direction.”

Matzzie says all this activity is impressive, but could prove irrelevant in the general election if it doesn’t take place in the right precincts. He notes that in 2002 only 94,000 well-placed votes would have given the Democrats control of Congress. He quotes recent studies from Yale’s Institution for Social and Policy Studies showing that e-mail on its own—just like direct mail and commercial phone banking—does not increase voter turnout. “Anyone who gives you his e-mail is already with you,” says Matzzie. “The trick is to get those people to talk to their neighbors, friends and colleagues offline. Those are the people we need to mobilize.” He’s been growing the AFL-CIO e-mail list by hundreds of thousands in the past few months with this goal in mind. But he’ll combine online work with shoe leather and door-knocking. Stanionis says the discussion among online advocacy experts is similar—how to get beyond the just-send-an-e-mail consumer model to “escalate the ask” and achieve more real-world involvement.

Matzzie is keeping a close eye on how the two major parties leverage technology in the months ahead: The Republican National Committee recently launched an “on-line toolbox for Republican activists” at GOPTeamLeader.com, and the Democrats will be bringing a similar site online soon. The net does not favor left or right, but it may favor outsiders who don’t have access to the power of incumbency, and progressives seem to have been quickest at putting it to use. For the moment the biggest and best-managed e-mail lists are in the hands of liberal advocates who are allies of the Democrats. But the Republicans, Matzzie says, have the stronger field organization, once a Democratic strength.

Matzzie is not the only organizer rejecting Internet hype for a more measured view of its capabilities. “The Internet has been

an enormous boon to grassroots mobilizations,” says UFPJ’s Kauffman. “But it can’t replace old-fashioned face-to-face organizing, especially when you’re trying to build something as delicate as a multiracial coalition.” The polarizing debate about how to take up the issue of Palestine, for example, which roiled the UFPJ list-serv in May, was handily resolved in the more goal-oriented and accountable setting of the coalition’s June conference. E-mail is a notoriously bad way to resolve serious disputes over contentious issues, since it easily leads to harsh tones and misunderstandings. The Internet is best for pulling together a coalition when there is already a broad base of agreement—as there was for UFPJ and MoveOn around the Iraq war. And fault lines in the MoveOn consensus may yet emerge if a prowar Democrat gets the nomination.

Thenmozhi Soundararajan, executive director of Third World Majority, a digital media collective, says the racial skew to who’s online further limits the usefulness of using e-mail to hash out political disputes. With only 3 percent of the world’s population online, the divide is even more pronounced in international campaigns. “When you’re online,” she says, “a whole lot of

people are not in the room.”

Kauffman says that UFPJ organizers, conscious of these demographics, were careful to use a mix of outreach strategies for the February 15 mo-

bilization, distributing 1.2 million pieces of literature in six languages in every corner of New York City.

In some ways, the debate over whether online organizing is as “real” or as effective as face-to-face organizing misses the point. What’s interesting about meetup.com, the UFPJ website and MoveOn’s meeting tool is how they leverage the Internet to get people together face to face in ways (and at speeds and costs) that were simply not possible before. As with the phone, the television or computer-generated direct mail, the Internet won’t replace traditional organizing, but it does alter the rules in important ways. Because e-mail is near-instantaneous and costs just fractions of a penny, one can communicate very quickly with a lot of people at the speed of word of mouth. Because it is browsable from home, at any hour, it provides a much easier first point of contact between a campaign and interested participants. Because it is a peer-to-peer tool open to all, it allows geographically dispersed people to find each other easily and coordinate. Because it is still an open-publishing model, free from the constraints of corporate-owned media, it can carry the channels of alternative information essential for sustaining social movements.

Although it replaces some organizing structures (e-mail makes for a far better phone tree than phones ever did) and invents whole new ones, like the campaign web hub or the meeting tool, the Internet is no silver bullet. But what organizing tool ever is? Rather, contemporary social movements will, more and more, straddle both worlds, in a synthetic feedback loop, at once real and virtual, online and off.

Last December in South Korea—the most densely wired country on the planet—a grassroots revolt streaming rich media across high-bandwidth connections helped elect an outsider human rights activist as president. Where will our own Internet-fueled movements take us?

‘We don’t think Americans are stupid or brain-washed or apathetic. We’re not trying to drag them kicking and screaming to our view.’

In the first month after MoveOn installed its meeting tool on the Dean campaign website, supporters self-organized more than a thousand local events—testament, perhaps, to the stirrings of a democratic revival, in which large swaths of disaffected Americans are finding forms of political participation that feel fulfilling, effective and connected. MoveOn's Zack Exley asks us to imagine a political landscape, five years from now, with fifty MoveOns, each tapping different political currents, with a whole new ability to mobilize grassroots power. In June, United for Peace and Justice announced plans for a

protest during the Republican National Convention in August 2004. But unlike the Philadelphia demonstrations in 2000, this protest will go global. Such plans are a sign of activists' growing confidence, post-February 15, in the potentially explosive convergence of common global concerns and the wide reach of the Net.

Whatever else it has done, the Internet has helped to level the playing field between an entrenched government and corporate and media power, and an insurgent citizenry. The future might indeed be up for grabs. ■

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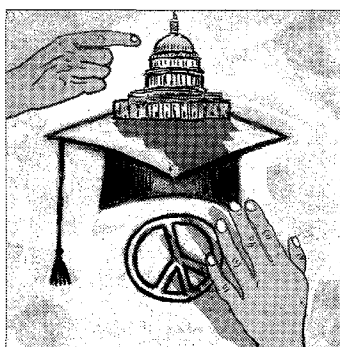
Antiwar Students Rock the Vote

LIZA FEATHERSTONE

Three years ago, Chantel Azadeh, 23, an antiwar activist at the University of California, Irvine, would never have imagined herself working on an electoral campaign. Ghafari, who belongs to an anarchist group called People Organized against War, Empire and Rulers, wasn't exactly the incremental-change type—and she certainly didn't see much difference between the Democrats and the Republicans. But 2004 may be different. "The last two years have done a number on a lot of people's minds," she says. "You might be surprised to hear this from an anti-authoritarian, an anarchist, but this election I plan on getting involved. I think it's crucial that we get Bush out of the White House."

Protests against Bush's war on Iraq drew more students than any other recent protest movement, and they were younger, more working-class and more racially and geographically diverse. Now it looks as if that protest energy may provide momentum for the 2004 elections. The enthusiastic volunteerism of right-wing students played a significant role in electing George W. Bush. It stands to reason, then, that progressive students, if equally savvy, could help toss him out. Azadeh is now planning to devote herself to that project, joining many other antiwar students who have been skeptical about electoral politics in the past.

A survey of young people conducted for MTV by Peter D. Hart Research Associates found that one out of every twelve respondents had attended an antiwar protest—and many more said the war had affected their voting plans. Fifty-three percent of those eligible to vote planned to pull the lever in 2004, a dramatic increase over recent past elections. "We're poised to see the highest [youth] participation yet," says Jehmu Greene, executive director of Rock the Vote. Though two-thirds of the respondents in the MTV poll said they supported the war, 54 percent believed that those who protested the war were "acting patriotically" and only 41 percent said they would vote for Bush. These numbers sug-



gest ambivalence about Bush and good will toward the antiwar movement—a real opening for young peace activists who want to build a voting bloc of their peers.

Though Rock the Vote took no position on the war, the organization views antiwar sentiment and the economy as the two most powerful vehicles for increasing youth voter participation this election cycle. A newspaper ad the organization co-sponsored with TomPaine.com, Peace Action and TrueMajority urged young people to register to vote, calling voting "the only peace demonstration the president can't ignore." It was illustrated with origami-style instructions showing how to fold an antiwar placard into a ballot.

This is far from an empty exhortation, given the surprisingly large field of antiwar presidential contenders. Former Illinois Senator Carol Moseley Braun took a stand against the war. The Rev. Al Sharpton became an antiwar activist himself, addressing numerous protest rallies. Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich was one of Capitol Hill's most dogged voices for peace, sponsoring an antiwar resolution and now demanding evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Even moderate Vermont Governor Howard Dean is running on his antiwar record, drawing attacks from the Democratic Leadership Council. Before Bush, says Dean supporter Franz Hartl, 25, most young liberals weren't driven to get involved in presidential politics because "things weren't so bad." But the Administration's extreme conservatism and its preemptive war on Iraq have changed the calculation. Besides, he says, young people "don't like to be lied to."

Activists with the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition (NYSPC), which coordinated antiwar protests on hundreds of campuses this past spring, are working to mold that sentiment into an antiwar voting bloc. On May 6, following up on demonstrations and student walkouts the group organized before and during the war, NYSPC kicked off a campaign to urge fellow students to vote for candidates who would fund education rather than military adventures—and to make politicians take notice of this evolving constituency. Many students, from campuses as

Liza Featherstone, co-author of Students Against Sweatshops (Verso), lives in New York.

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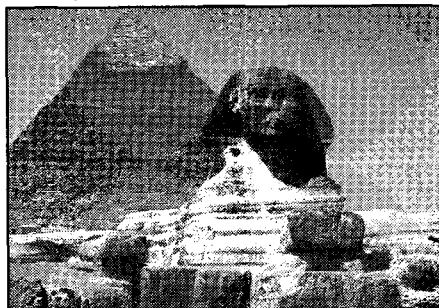
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Offer Good Through: **August 28, 2003**

diverse as Bushwick High School in Brooklyn, New York, and Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, had classmates sign cards pledging to vote for "books, not bombs." Some registered voters, while others lobbied their elected officials; during finals week, Philadelphia-area high school and college students organized a "study-in" in far-right Senator Rick Santorum's office. So far, NYSPC has not endorsed any specific candidates, and is still discussing when—and whether—to do that.

Meanwhile, many antiwar students have already made their pick, with Dean drawing the most campus enthusiasm. He may perform unevenly in national polls, but students like his claim to represent "the democratic wing of the Democratic Party" and compare him to Gene McCarthy, the antiwar candidate in 1968. Activists on more than 200 campuses are campaigning for Dean—in his native Northeast, but also in South Carolina, Alabama and Arkansas—and more are signing up every week. "The growth has been tremendous," says Yoni Cohen, 22, who ran Students for Dean at Washington University in St. Louis this past semester (now graduated, he's working as an organizer for the Dean campaign). Dean supporters at Tulane University, in New Orleans, recently staged "Liberalpalooza," a day of concerts and speakers, and elsewhere, student Dean boosters have been giving out free Vermont Maple Syrup and Ben & Jerry's ice cream, in playful reference to the political obscurity of their man's home state.

This summer, many young volunteers have headed north for "Camp Dean." They will knock on New Hampshire doors by day and camp out in local campsites with fellow politicians by night. In addition to this army of short-term campers, 150 student interns will canvass full-time throughout the summer. A spokesperson for the Dean campaign says the camp was designed to inspire students to organize for Dean on campus in the fall and also provide students with the training to do so effectively.

Hartl, together with several other recent college graduates, has formed Music for America, with the goal of using the influence of politically conscious musicians and the power of young voters to elect Dean. Music for America puts on small benefit concerts, raises campaign contributions online and will offer stipends to students and youth to canvass in early primary states in December and January.

Hartl was an antisweatshop activist at Boston College and more recently participated in several antiwar protests in New York City. But he found himself "disappointed that [protest] wasn't having more of an effect." He says he and his friends founded MFA because they realized that "every recently successful progressive movement has been a cultural one," mentioning the recent victory of the Workers Party in Brazil. They book most of their shows in places like Siberia, a beloved, if grungy, Manhattan bar. The evenings combine political speeches with appearances by alternative icons in an effort to engage alienated sophisticates. At one June event, political hip-hoppers Arrested Development gave a reunion performance, and indie literary icon Neal Pollack has promised his support. "We're hip, ironic," laughs Hartl. "We're

using culture to show that Karl Rove and the Cato Institute are dorks and losers."

Hartl, who voted for Ralph Nader in 1996 and 2000, says that until recently he "bought into the idea that there was no difference between Democrats and Republicans," and he still despises DLC Democrats, who "keep going after the middle, instead of trying to excite people who've never voted before." Few Naderites have abandoned their belief in third-party politics, but many, like Hartl, are far more terrified of the actual Bush Administration than they were of its prospects in 2000. Hartl expects the Dean campaign to ease some of the hostility between Greens and progressive Dems. Indeed, at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, leaders of the Campus Greens and Young Democrats are jointly coordinating the Dean campaign. Roey Rosenblith, 21, from the Green half of that duo, organized antiwar protests earlier this year and is adamantly opposed to the two-party system. But he says Greens

'Call me a sellout or whatever. I know a lot of anti-authoritarians will. But it's crucial to elect someone who will lessen the madness.'

must become more practical, which may mean working sometimes in coalition with progressive Democrats. Democrats, for their part, "should stop blaming Nader

[for 2000] and say, 'Maybe we should change what we're doing.'"

Even though Dennis Kucinich was more fiercely antiwar than Dean, he is so far drawing much less campus interest. Faraz Waheed, 19, a student at Ohio State who has been active in the Campus Greens, on Palestinian liberation and against the war, has been struggling hard to drum up excitement about Kucinich at his school—located in Kucinich's home state. "He's not going to win." That's the biggest objection we hear," says Waheed. "There's a trend toward seeing Dennis as a joke, and Howard Dean as a realistic choice." In a recent Gallup poll, for example, Kucinich captured just 1 percent of Democrats.

Jessica Davis, 21, a recent graduate of the University of Cincinnati who is now the youth coordinator for Kucinich's campaign, is undaunted by Dean's competition for the antiwar student vote. She acknowledges that Kucinich's campus campaign has lagged behind Dean's, but insists, "We're very new." While the Dean campaign began in earnest in March, Davis only began organizing campus support for Kucinich at the end of the school year. The candidate has been traveling to campuses—Berkeley, UCLA, Grinnell College in Iowa, as well as colleges and universities in his home state—where he often draws more than a thousand students. "And at each event," Davis says, speaking by cell phone from Stanford University, "students come up and say, How do I get involved?" Davis says students opposing the war are particularly excited about the candidate, but the challenge is that "they don't know what they can do, where to start." For many accustomed to organizing protests, an electoral campaign is something new.

Al Sharpton, the candidate most connected to the grassroots antiwar movement, is the top choice among black Democrats, but has yet to attract broader interest. When asked about his plans to mobilize young people for his campaign, he said he'd enlist pop stars. "You think it's big when Jay-Z comes to Harlem," he said, "how about when Jay-Z comes to Greenville, South Carolina?" But Jay-Z has yet to endorse Sharpton ("We're talking," the candidate says), and so far, Sharpton's campaign has

TIME TO END THE KOREAN WAR

Fifty years ago, on July 27, 1953, an armistice was signed to end the fighting in the Korean War. That war killed more than three million Koreans, more than half a million Chinese, and more than 35,000 Americans. The war has never formally ended. Korea remains divided, and the United States and North Korea (DPRK) remain technically at war with each other half a century after the armistice. Tragically, another war now looms over the Korean peninsula,

- 1 We feel strongly that another war on the Korean peninsula is unthinkable. Military action must not be considered, much less taken, under any circumstances. All sides must publicly renounce any military option.
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We, the Alliance of Scholars Concerned about Korea (ASCK), call on all concerned people to join us in finally putting an end to the war in Korea.

***The* ALLIANCE OF SCHOLARS CONCERNED ABOUT KOREA**

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For further information on ASCK, including how to become a member and how to contribute, please visit our website at www.asck.org.

little campus presence. Calls to campaign headquarters for Carol Moseley Braun went unreturned.

Whether or not any particular presidential campaign attracts mass student support, Bush's aggressive warmongering and perilous mishandling of the economy have undoubtedly drawn many young people into electoral politics. But as much as they want to defeat Bush, most are not willing to support a prowar Democrat. If Dean doesn't win the nomination, Rosenblith says he'll vote Green. Ben Waxman, who just graduated from Springfield Township High School in Erdenheim, Pennsylvania, and an organizer with NYSPC, says if the Democrats nominate Lieberman (that Gallup poll put him as the top choice among Democrats), he'll abandon electoral work for protest and direct action.

Many young peace activists remain unimpressed by the pool of candidates and will be tough to recruit into electoral work. To

them, participating in the Democratic Party is a distraction from building a long-term alternative to what Ralph Nader called the "Republicrats"—or building a mass movement that could make such an alternative viable. Yvonne Liu, a Columbia University senior who has been active in the campus antiwar movement and in several anti-authoritarian groups, predicts that many more young activists like herself will vote in '04. But Liu won't go to work for a candidate, which she says would mean "getting co-opted by our market democracy."

Chantel Azadeh isn't so sure. "Call me a sellout or whatever," she says, "I know a lot of anti-authoritarians will. But it's crucial to elect someone who will lessen the madness." She will help out the Campus Greens this fall. As for presidential candidates, Azadeh says, "I like Howard Dean a lot. I think he would be a great President." ■

THE ADMINISTRATION APPEARS TO BE BENT ON TEACHING LIBERAL STATES A LESSON.

Getting the Blues

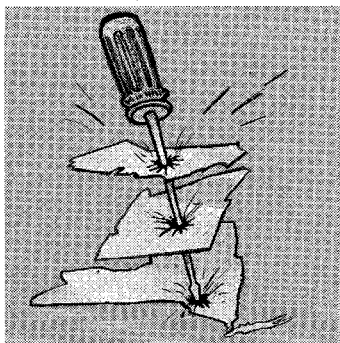
PETER SCHRAG

In the winter and early spring of 2001, when Dick Cheney was telling Californians that their sky-high electricity bills were their own tree-hugging fault, you might have thought the Administration was just covering for Enron CEO Ken Lay and George W. Bush's other Texas energy friends and, as an added bonus, sticking it to the lotus-eaters on the Left Coast who'd given Al Gore his million-vote California majority.

But that was just the paranoia of the innocent. In the past year, as the nation's deficit-ridden states were pleading for federal help, Washington was telling them all to drop dead—reserving harshest treatment for the "blues," meaning the liberal states that voted for Democrats. While California was not alone, it was certainly the biggest target, as the only large state with a Democratic governor, Democratic legislature and a Congressional delegation dominated (32-to-20) by Democrats. "They view California," said a Washington lobbyist, "as a foreign land."

Some of that you can ascribe to the Administration's efforts to suck every possible dollar of the cost of Bush's tax cuts from the states. But behind the fiscal policies—the unfunded mandates (i.e., new federal requirements without funds to help states comply); the cost of NCLB, Bush's "No Child Left Behind" education law; the childcare expenses made necessary by the Administration's proposed new federal work rules for welfare recipients—there seemed to be an ideological thrust, bordering on vindictiveness, aimed at teaching the liberal states a lesson.

Late in April, as states like Oregon were preparing to close schools weeks before the end of the term, and others were dump-



KAREN CALDICOTT

ing hundreds of thousands off the Medicaid rolls, laying off cops and raising college tuition to close a collective two-year deficit estimated by the nonpartisan National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) at upwards of \$100 billion, Grover Norquist said he'd like to see a state or two go bankrupt.

Norquist, who runs the conservative Americans for Tax Reform and heads what Bill Moyers has called a politburo of conservative strategy, is also joined at the hip with Karl Rove, the President's political brain and one of his chief policy advisers. "I hope a state has real trouble getting its act together," Norquist told the *New York Times's* David Firestone. "We need a state to be a bad example, so that the others will start to make the serious decisions they need to get out of this mess." When Norquist speaks on such issues, you're never sure whether he's the ventriloquist or Rove's talking dog.

Brian Riedl, a fellow at the Heritage Foundation, put it more mildly, but it amounted to the same thing. "Deficits," he said, "provide states with a golden opportunity to examine their budgets and reduce wasteful and ineffective spending, which helps them keep taxes low and aid the economic recovery." Lay off those teachers, kick poor working mothers off the rolls of those who get help with childcare, close a few more parks. Norquist's and Riedl's remarks were generally directed at "states," but it didn't take much parsing to conclude that they weren't referring to Nebraska or Alabama. It was the liberal states—the Democratic states with the relatively generous social welfare programs and the more progressive tax rates—that they were talking about.

Forget that Washington, with Bush's multitrillion-dollar tax cuts, is running deficits that are proportionally larger than those of the states; forget that at least part of the states' problems resulted

Peter Schrag, a columnist with the Sacramento Bee, is the author of Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future (California).

not just from their unchecked boom-era spending and from a recession compounded by misbegotten federal economic policies but from their own tax cuts, which could have come straight out of Norquist's playbook. Both New York and California would have \$13–\$14 billion more in annual revenues had they not cut their own taxes during the mid- and late 1990s. Which is to say that the states' problems are also compounded by Norquist's White House friends and his allies in the Republican Congress.

Nor, of course, is it just the blue states that are being hit. Altogether, according to the NCSL, as of mid-April unfunded and underfunded mandates imposed on state and local governments totaled between \$23.5 billion and \$82.5 billion a year. When Democrats and Republican moderates like Maine's Olympia Snowe pressured Congress in May to add a \$20 billion, two-year state fiscal-assistance package to Bush's \$800 billion tax cut, therefore, it covered less than half of the lowest estimate of just the unfunded-mandate part of the gap, itself a fraction of a long list of other federal impositions. (And because the new federal tax cuts include cuts in dividend and capital gains tax rates, they also make equities more attractive and thus raise the cost to states and municipalities of the bonds they issue.)

The fiscal assistance package prompted NCSL to issue a handout praising Congress for the help. But privately, state officials said it was far too little: NCSL itself had wanted \$40 billion. The Democratic Governors Association wanted \$63 billion in aid and infrastructure investments. Among the most effective stimulus packages are strong state programs in public works, education and social services.

Lobbyists for state organizations in Washington will also tell you privately that the White House has "thoroughly intimidated" Republican governors—and some Democrats as well. "The Republicans are so disciplined," said a frustrated lobbyist for a Democratic governor. "The White House has imposed enormous pressure on the GOP governors, which is why you don't see the National Governors Association making much noise." Snowe, Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter and other Republican moderates, who've been savagely attacked by conservative organizations like the Club for Growth, know the price of even minor departures from the White House line.

You hear the same thing from people in the nonpartisan organizations, though none of them want to be identified either. This, said one, "is the most political administration I've seen in thirty years. If you're part of the team, you get access, but once you leave the reservation, that's it. Anyone who's not on board is done, and anything that shows blue is suspect." Norquist and fellow conservatives are using the long arms of the White House and Congress to discipline the states.

Even before Bush was elected, according to people like Tim Ransdell, who runs the California Institute, a nonpartisan research organization supplying data to that state's Congressional delegation, the structure of federal formulas made California and the Northeastern states the big "donor states"—those that paid more in federal taxes than they got back in federal programs and con-

tracts. For every dollar California pays in taxes, it gets back 82 cents; for every dollar New Jersey pays, it gets back 67 cents; for every dollar Montana pays, it gets back \$1.75.

Bush-era unfunded mandates and impositions, like expenses for homeland security, however, have been particularly hard on the so-called blue states. In part that's because they tend to be the states with the poorer people, the larger welfare and Medicaid loads, and, not coincidentally, the tougher environmental regulations, none of them beloved by this Administration.

But of course these are also the states that voted for Gore and thus, with the exception of the states that may be in play in 2004, find no particular hospitality in the Bush Administration. According to Representative Bob Matsui, a Democrat, and others in the California delegation, even staunch California Republicans, like Representative David Dreier, head of California's GOP caucus, have a hard time getting access to the White House. "Dreier's staff," said a staff member for another Californian, "feel like stepchildren. The White House

pays attention to swing states like Pennsylvania and Illinois, but California"—where Bush was trounced in 2000 and where Gray Davis won re-election as governor in 2002 despite a major White House effort to beat him—"has been humiliating for Rove. He ended with egg on his face.... They're not going to do a damn thing for us."

In April 2001, after California's misbegotten energy deregulation scheme opened the state to big-time price gouging by Enron and other Texas energy marketers, Cheney met with Congress members from the Northwest, but according to Representative Jay Inslee of Washington, only on condition that Californians be kept out of the meeting. If California hadn't thought it could conserve its way out of its energy needs, Cheney said, it wouldn't have blocked the construction of new power plants. It could expect no regulatory help from Washington—and it got none until Senator James Jeffords quit the GOP and control of the Senate changed hands in June 2001.

Cheney's charge was a bum rap. It was the energy producers' own caution about market prospects that kept them from proposing new California plants; it was a Republican governor who, in 1996, approved California's wrongheaded deregulation scheme; and, as the country later learned, it was market manipulation, abetted by the failure of both the state and federal governments to act, that helped drive energy prices through the roof.

But the list of particulars runs far beyond energy.

§ House approval (still pending in the Senate) of the Administration's tougher work rules under TANF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Those requirements—to work forty hours a week rather than the current thirty—would be virtually impossible to meet for workers in the low-wage restaurant and hotel jobs in which many ex-welfare recipients find themselves. That would create a need not only for more state-funded public service jobs at a time when states are laying off thousands of workers but for billions in additional state childcare money. In California alone, according to the state's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst, those changes would cost \$2.8 billion over the next five years. If the

'This is the most political administration in thirty years. Anyone who's not on board is done, and anything that shows blue is suspect.'

rules go into effect, State Senator Raymond Meier of New York, a Republican, told a House committee, "it will force states to reallocate TANF funding away from creative and innovative services [to get people off welfare] and exacerbate the difficulties states face in providing childcare to those on welfare and poor working families."

§ A gap of at least \$6 billion annually between what Bush promised and Congress authorized under NCLB to pay for the mandated education programs—"highly qualified" teachers in every classroom by 2005–06, intensive reading programs for at-risk children and the required yearly progress in test scores. One researcher in Vermont calculated that it would take more than \$84 billion to comply with NCLB annual progress requirements. Bush has proposed \$10 billion. Every state, from New Hampshire to Washington, is feeling that pinch; New Hampshire's school administrators say that for every dollar the state gets from the Feds, it has to kick in \$7 to meet the NCLB requirements.

§ Ongoing underfunding of the costs of homeland security. According to federal formulas, the \$2 billion that Congress is now providing gives states like Wyoming and South Dakota—those magnets for terrorists—between eight and ten times as much per resident as California or New York. And even that money hardly compensates for cuts in other federal law-enforcement assistance. A new study conducted for the Council on Foreign Relations concluded that tight state and local budgets had sharply reduced police manpower in many places and that federal funding for state and local security over the next five years fell short by some \$98 billion—a huge figure but, in the words of study adviser Richard Clarke, "decimal dust" compared with the Defense Department budget.

§ The effects of the first round of Bush tax cuts, which Representative John Spratt of South Carolina, the senior Democrat on the House Budget Committee, says has cost the states about \$75 billion. The Bush Administration, he told the *Times*, is "just indifferent to the problem they're causing."

Those discrepancies are partly the result of formulas—and the clout of senators—that always give small states proportionally more money than populous states. But in this Administration and Congress, there's special relish in whacking the liberal states.

Maybe you can write off the Administration's double standard in agreeing to buy back oil leases off the Florida coast last year, but refusing to do the same in California. Since Governor Jeb Bush, the President's brother, was running for reelection, call that politics as usual. But what are we to make of the Justice Department's unprecedented decision to join auto makers (in this case General Motors) in their lawsuit attacking state emission control regulations, as the Feds did last year in California?

What of changed EPA rules on so-called new source review, which, to please energy industry contributors—who kicked in some \$44 million to the Bush campaign—allow factories, refineries and power plants to expand and build without installing the most advanced emission controls? Those changes came in the face of vehement protests and lawsuits from the Northeastern

states, where ecosystems are being damaged by acid rain created by pollution from Midwestern power plants.

What of the move to allow the Pentagon, in the name of national defense, to get around all federal toxic-dumping rules on its military installations, despite protests from agencies like the California EPA, and regardless of the fact that a lot of the toxics leach into neighboring wells and groundwater? According to a study for the Environmental Group conducted by Texas Tech University, perchlorate, a rocket fuel component that can depress thyroid function and impede development in fetuses and newborn babies, has already contaminated water in nineteen states and has been found in lettuce at four times the level the EPA regards as safe in drinking water.

And what of the intense, relentless campaign launched by Attorney General John Ashcroft and drug czar John Walters to gut voter-enacted state medical marijuana laws? At a time when federal law-enforcement authorities are supposedly stretched thin by terrorism threats, what perverse passion would drive them to

devote precious investigative and prosecutorial resources to that dubious purpose? Eight states, including Arizona, have approved such laws in the past seven years, all but

one by voter initiative, but it's been California and Californians that have been virtually the sole target.

The same Justice Department vehemence has been directed toward eviscerating Oregon's doctor-assisted-suicide law, approved twice by voters in that state. That attempt, still blocked in the courts, has implications far beyond assisted suicide, since it could subject any physician using morphine or other drugs to relieve the pain of cancer or other diseases in terminally ill patients to prosecution or denial of the right to prescribe, which is tantamount to a denial of the right to practice.

Ashcroft says that federal Drug Enforcement Administration operatives can easily discern the "important medical, ethical and legal distinctions between intentionally causing a patient's death and providing sufficient dosages of pain medication necessary to eliminate or alleviate pain." But as any doctor can tell you, that's baloney. The very process of alleviating pain may hasten death.

What's particularly notable about Ashcroft's crusade is its intrusion into an area constitutionally reserved to the states by an Administration professing to honor states' rights headed by a former governor who has promised to be sensitive to the problems of the states.

In February, Ashcroft, a longtime friend of the gun lobby, threatened to criminally prosecute California officials for what he claims is illegal use of a federal data bank to track down illegal gun users. Ashcroft had also threatened to go after Georgia officials for denying gun permits to people that the federal data bank showed had been arrested for felonies but not convicted. Georgia complied, and according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, seventeen or eighteen people facing felony charges are now given Georgia gun permits daily.

You can get endless arguments about the motives. Is the White House's ugly treatment of the states simply the result of political expedience by an Administration that even opponents like Matsui

At a time of terrorism threats, what passion would drive federal authorities to focus on gutting state medical marijuana laws?

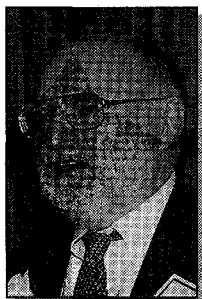
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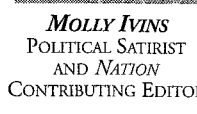
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THE PITY OF IT ALL



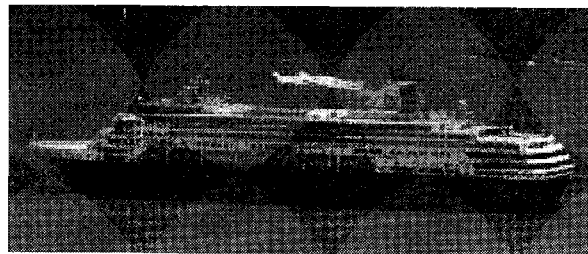
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say is highly astute politically, or is there an unbending ideological streak that, in ways never before attempted, seeks to use federal muscle to beat back liberalism in the states with nearly the same vehemence and determination it applies to federal policy?

Through the past two and a half years, the Administration, often flying the flag of the terrorism war, has altered federal policy in ways that couldn't have been imagined before the 2000 election—in its radical aggrandizement of the power to investigate, wiretap and detain suspects; in the concomitant rollback of civil liberties; in its tolerance for polluters and offshore tax dodges; in its multitrillion-dollar tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans; in its rollback of countless social programs.

But the attempt, often successful, to extend those efforts into the states, to use local cops to search out undocumented immigrants for detention, to go after liberal state laws—auto emission

controls, medical marijuana, doctor-assisted suicide, welfare and childcare—is unprecedented. Without fanfare or discussion, the Administration appears to be putting the screws to liberal state programs with the same determination it is applying to things like tax cuts (which, of course, are the key to all other domestic policy).

Consistent with that effort, in March the White House decided no longer to publish a key document called *Budget Information for States*, which reported annually how much states receive under each federal program, and thus made it easy for local officials and advocacy groups to keep track of how their programs were treated. Eliminating the book, said a spokesman for the Office of Management and Budget, will eliminate the cost of the paper and production of the volume. How frugal. Who would have thought that it would be a Republican—and an ex-governor to boot—who'd bring federalism to its knees? ■

WITHOUT IT, NO STATE CAN ENDURE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE JEWISH NATURE.

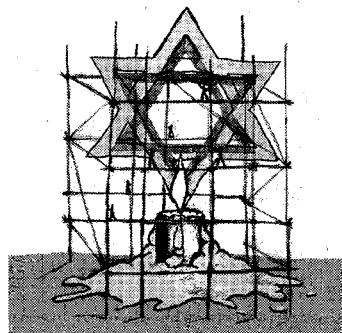
Why Israel Must Choose Justice

ARTHUR MILLER

The following speech was delivered on June 25. The Jerusalem Prize honors literary achievement in the field of freedom of the individual in society.
—The Editors

I wish to thank you for this honor and for allowing me to join the distinguished list of authors who were past recipients of the Jerusalem Prize. The awarding of this prize in recognition of my work as a writer also cites my activities in defense of civil rights. As a past president of International P.E.N., the association of writers from around the world committed to the defense of the freedom to write, I have visited many countries with various political systems, at times to try to get writers out of jail, at other times simply to reinforce local P.E.N. centers in their struggle, quite often, to continue to exist. To tell the truth, I never wanted to spend time away from my desk, but it may be that as a Jew of a certain generation I was unable to forget the silence of the 1930s and '40s, when Fascism began its destruction of our people, which for so long met with the indifference of the world. Perhaps it is because I have tried to do something useful to protect human rights that I know how hard it is to make good things happen. At the same time, my experience tells me that most people by far continue to believe in justice and wish it to prevail.

Because I have at least a sense of the many terrible contradictions in Israel's situation vis-à-vis the Palestinians, I am also conscious of my distance from the day-to-day realities. So I am not going to lecture or try to persuade. The fundamentals of my views are simply that Israel has the right to exist, and the Pales-



tinians likewise, in a state of their own. With the expansion of settlements I have witnessed, initially with surprise and then with incredulity, what seemed a self-defeating policy. I am not going to pursue conflicting arguments with secondhand knowledge, but merely to say the obvious—that the settlement policy appears to have changed the very nature of the Israeli state and that a new birth of a humanistic vision is necessary if the Jewish presence is to be seen as worth preserving. To put it perhaps too succinctly—without justice at its center, no state can endure as a representation of the Jewish nature.

I might fill in some of the background of these views, because this background is what provides the stark contrast for me with the present tragic situation. I have not been without some small experience with political Israel. I was invited to attend the Waldorf dinner in 1948 to celebrate the Soviet Union's recognition of the State of Israel, which was the first and for a time her only international acknowledgment. The very idea of a nation of Jews existing in modern times was hard to imagine then. It was almost as though a scene out of the Bible were being re-enacted, but this time with real people smoking cigarettes. Imagine! Jewish bus drivers, Jewish cops, Jewish street sweepers, Jewish judges and the criminals they judged, Jewish prostitutes and movie stars, Jewish plumbers and carpenters and bankers, a Jewish president and parliament and a Jewish secretary of state. All this was something so new on the earth that it never dawned on me or, I think, on most people, that the new Israel, as a state governed by human beings, would behave more or less the same as any state had acted down through history—defending its existence by all means thought necessary and even expanding its borders when possible. In 1948, from the prospect of New York at any rate, the very idea of a Jew-

Arthur Miller, the distinguished playwright and author, wrote Death of a Salesman, The Crucible and All My Sons, among others.

ish state was defensive, since it was under almost perpetual attack. It existed at all as a refuge for a people that had barely escaped a total genocidal wipeout in Europe only a few years earlier. And so it was, I think, that the predominant sense of things at that Waldorf celebration was that, having passed out of the control and domination of others, the time had come for Jews to act normal.

Naturally, it never occurred to most people, certainly not to me, what normal really meant. In that ebullient Waldorf moment and afterward one heard little or nothing of the dark side of the history of new states, especially their sharp collisions with other peoples in the same or contiguous areas. For some years, especially in the United States, a certain idyllic Israel existed in the public imagination, and for some it probably still does. The Israel of the kibbutz, of the rescued land, of the pioneers and the pioneering cooperative spirit reminiscent of summer camp. There was inevitably a lot of psychological denial in this picture, just as there always is in the nationalist picture of any nation. I was not a Zionist, but I certainly participated, however unwittingly, in this kind of denial—although it did seem rather odd to hear Golda Meir responding to a question about the Palestinians by saying, “We are the Palestinians.” But this seemed about as harmless as the American President’s habit of resolving the harsh inequalities in American society by pridefully declaring, “We are all Americans.”

The Jewish obsession with justice goes back to the beginnings, of course. Job, after all, is not complaining merely that he has lost everything; he is not some bourgeois caught in an economic depression. His bewilderment derives from a horrendous vision of a world without justice, which means a world collapsed into chaos and brute force. And if he is called upon to have faith in god anyway, it is a god who in some mysterious manner does indeed still stand for justice, however inscrutable his design may be.

Israel in that Waldorf moment meant the triumph of sheer survival, the determination to live a dignified life. Israel also signaled the survival of a temperament, the continuing Jewish entanglement in the mesh of life, and somehow the Jewish engagement with eternal things. In short, Israel was far more than a political entity, let alone a geographic place, probably at least in part because it was so far away and the distance turned it into something approaching an artistic expression, a sort of bright vision of productive peace.

However it may have evolved, it appears at this distance that from the assassination of Rabin onward the settlement policy and the present leadership’s apparent abandonment of Enlightenment values before the relentless suicide bombings and the inevitable fear they have engendered have backed the country away from its visionary character and with it the Waldorf prospect of a peaceful, progressive, normal society like any other. What is left, so it appears, is its very opposite—an armed and rather desperate society at odds with its neighbors but also the world. That it remains the only democracy in the area is easily glossed over as though this were not of great consequence, such is the hostility surrounding the country in many minds. Maybe the hypocrisy in this conflict

is no greater than usual, but it is certainly no less.

Is it because the country is the country of the Jews that this hostility has found so little resistance? I think so, but not for the obvious reason of congenital anti-Semitism, at least not entirely. It is also because the Jews have from their beginnings declared that god above all means justice before any other value. We are the people of the book and the book, after all, is the Bible, and the Bible means justice or it means nothing, at least nothing that matters. The shield of Israel, it seems to me, was that here in this place a kind of righting of the scales of justice had at last taken place, this people had in fact survived the mechanized genocide and had come back to once again work the land and raise up new cities. This Israel, in my experience, soon earned the admiration and

The shield of Israel, it seems to me, was that here in this place a kind of righting of the scales of justice had at last taken place.

respect of people, many of whom, to my knowledge, had had no special regard for Jews or were even hostile to them. This refusal of death and embrace of life resonated out

into the world, and it seems to me now as it did half a century ago, this was Israel’s shield, quite as much as her valor in arms.

It may be futile to argue with a repeated story that every modern nation has gone through in its development—a democratic system for its own citizens, and something quite different for others outside its physical and psychological boundaries. Israel’s misfortune, as the current leadership and its partisans no doubt see matters, is the lateness of its arrival on the scene, long after a colonial mentality was thought not only normal but praiseworthy. Whole long blocks of very solid buildings still stand in London, Vienna, Paris, which were once filled with offices whose function was the administering of the lives and fates of peoples thousands of miles away in climates that no European would ever see. Post-Rabin Israel, no doubt as an act of defense, is nevertheless asking not only that the clock stop but that it turn backward to allow Israel’s expansion into lands beyond its borders.

Finally, I believe it would be a mistake to attribute so much of the world’s resentment of this policy to anti-Semitism. The United States, incredibly to most Americans, is experiencing a very similar aversion in the world, and very possibly for similar reasons. The American Administration has turned an extraordinarily hard and uncompromising face to the world, and along with a certain arrogant self-righteousness in its tone has alienated a lot of people who only a short while back were genuinely commiserating with us over the bloody attacks of 9/11. It was not long ago, after all, that the French—yes, the French—were declaring in some banner headlines, “We Are All Americans Now.”

It may have struck some of you that what I have been talking about is basically public relations—the impact of Israel as an image before the world—rather than the hard questions of security and new arrangements with the Palestinians. But my inspiration in this goes a long way further back into history than the public relations industry. Thomas Jefferson, writing the American Declaration of Independence, inserted into it a phrase no doubt to help justify the new democracy’s decision to break away from the British Empire. Thus he hoped to appeal to the forbearance of a hostile world of monarchy and imperialism. The Declaration, he said, was written “In decent respect for the opinions of man-

kind..." In short, the weak, newly born society needed the world's friendship or at least its toleration even as it was prepared to go to war for its independence.

There too something unique was being ushered into a largely hostile world; the British were the enemy and French support was purely strategic, the monarchy having no use for this new democracy whose influence it suspected might endanger the regime. But Jefferson and his friends understood and accepted that no nation can for long endure, whatever the urgency of its defenses, with

less than respect, let alone contempt, for the rest of mankind in its longings for justice and equity for all. But my own belief is somewhat less than pessimistic. A nation's history does count a great deal in determining its future. Jewish history is extremely long and is filled, as I have said, with an obsession with justice. It is a terrible irony that, in a sense, the State of Israel today is being attacked by those wielding visionary ideals that were born in the Jewish heart. It is time for Jewish leadership to reclaim its own history and to restore its immortal light to the world. ■

COLLATERAL DAMAGE MOUNTS IN BUSH'S IDEOLOGICAL WAR ON THE WELFARE STATE.

...and the Poor Get Poorer

KIM PHILLIPS-FEIN

A year ago, Loretta Gruytch decided to go back to work.

The 71-year-old resident of Lebanon, Oregon, had suffered from high blood pressure for some time. But her medications cost \$600 a month, and she and her husband (who also has health problems) live on Social Security. "You make a choice between paying rent and utilities and getting medication, and you have to have a place to live."

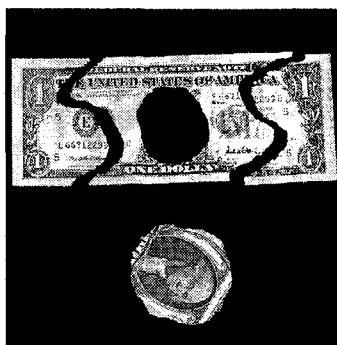
She'd held jobs in retail and as a mail carrier. She didn't think she could handle a forty-hour job, but she thought that twenty or twenty-five hours would be enough to pay for her prescriptions.

But she had put it off too long. While she was at a job interview at a local deli, she had a brain aneurysm and a stroke, and had to be rushed to the hospital. Her doctor helped her to enroll in Oregon's healthcare plan. For the past year, Gruytch has been able to get her medicine. But today, mired in budget crisis, Oregon is cutting back on health coverage. As a result, Gruytch may lose her prescription coverage altogether. She says, "I don't know what I will do if they take my medicine away."

On the other side of the country, 43-year-old Brooklyn resident Maria Jones has also slipped through the cracks of the social safety net, forced to choose between her daughter's education and her own health.

Jones came to the United States from Puerto Rico at the age of 18. She married young and had three children, but divorced her soldier husband after the marriage turned violent (they went through rounds of counseling first). When her children were young, she worked in a dentist's office. More recently, she was a childcare worker, making and selling crocheted and knitted goods on the side.

Two years ago Jones had a massive heart attack, leaving her



KAREN CALDICOTT

face partially paralyzed for months. After her illness, she could not work, nor could she complete the work requirements she needed to get welfare. She began to fall behind on rent. Her youngest daughter—"my miracle baby"—was in her first year at Hunter College at the time, and living with her mother. Jones asked her daughter to apply for welfare. "I was always taught that families stick together, no matter what," says Jones. When a caseworker told her daughter that she would need to leave school and enroll in the

Work Experience Program (WEP, the city's "workfare" program) to get benefits, she dropped out of school.

After she recovered somewhat, Jones told her daughter to go back to college. "She gave me one semester of her life. I was not going to let her give up her dreams to get welfare," she says. Now, she subsists on a disability check of \$570 a month. Her rent is \$680. "Unless I hit the lotto, I don't know what I am going to do."

In the Bush Administration's ideological war on the welfare state, Gruytch and Jones are collateral damage. Unlike with Clinton, who sought to end welfare "as we know it," the Bush agenda explicitly targets noncash benefits, like healthcare and education, which currently are available to poor and working poor people. Some of the changes the Administration seeks are subtle switches in rules—demanding additional paperwork for the earned-income tax credit, for example, or extra documentation for poor children to receive school lunch. Others replace federal entitlements with block grants to states.

Taken together, the proposed changes will make it more difficult for people to get healthcare, housing assistance, early childhood education and other minimal social benefits. They will fall especially painfully on the working poor. While President Clinton's 1996 welfare reform law rescinded the federal entitlement to cash assistance, the Bush proposals seek to end the social minimum wage.

One common thread of the Bush Administration's proposals is that they aim to turn federal entitlement programs into block grants. The idea of block-granting these programs, which began with Reagan's attacks on poverty programs and expanded with

Kim Phillips-Fein, a fellow at the Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, is a contributing editor to In These Times and The Baffler. She is working on a book about the backlash against the New Deal.

Clinton-era welfare reform, may sound like a technical change interesting only to policy wonks. But in reality, it is a way of quietly defunding social programs, slowly ending health coverage and rent supports for people who have them now. Just as the language of states' rights during the Jim Crow era was a way to disguise the demands of white segregationists, the language of block grants is a way of deflecting attention from the social costs of cutting back the welfare state.

The scariest proposals involve Medicaid. Right now, the program—which provides health coverage for about 48 million people—is administered by the states but jointly funded by the federal government and the states. Every dollar that a state spends on Medicaid is matched by some money from the federal government. In January, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson proposed turning the program into block grants. If such a proposal became law, the federal government would give a fixed, capped amount to each state every year. Since there would be no built-in mechanism to increase federal spending should states' costs rise, this would be likely to erode funding in the long run.

In addition, there would be no incentive to expand services (federal matching funds would be eliminated). Joan Alker, a senior research fellow at Georgetown University who focuses on healthcare, says, "If more people came on the rolls, if there was a new technology or drug, if there was an epidemic, states would be left holding the bag."

Under block grants, states might also get greater "flexibility" to determine benefit packages. They might even have the option to deliver services selectively for certain populations—to one part of the state, but not another. Currently, the Medicaid program is divided into two parts—"mandatory" recipients and "optional" recipients, and "mandatory" services and "optional" services. Mandatory recipients include pregnant women and children under 6 up to 133 percent of the poverty line, children under 19 below the poverty line, some low-income parents, children in foster care and elderly and disabled people on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Mandatory services include hospital services, doctor's visits, nursing-home care, immunizations and lab services.

But a quarter of Medicaid recipients and the majority of elderly recipients are optional beneficiaries, meaning that the federal government does not require states to cover them. These include elderly and disabled people with incomes above the SSI limit (74 percent of poverty), working parents above mandatory income levels, pregnant women above 133 percent of poverty, and low-income children above the poverty line. Many services provided by Medicaid are optional as well—including prescription drugs (for anyone but children), home healthcare, vision and dental care. In a budget crisis, these would be the first ones to go if the federal government isn't funding them. Indeed, states have already started to cut "optional" populations off Medicaid. The people whose healthcare is threatened are marginal and poor. According to a report by Cindy Mann of Georgetown's Institute for Health Care Research and Policy, in 1998 the optional benefit population included 4.2 million children, 3.7 million working parents, 2.3 million elderly people and 1.5 million people with

disabilities. Medicaid also covers a high proportion of nursing-home expenses. Denise Soffel, health policy analyst at New York's Community Service Society, says, "People aren't thinking about Granny in the nursing home using Medicaid dollars."

The Bush Administration's hopes for rapid Medicaid reform were stymied when members of the National Governors Association were unable to agree on a proposal endorsing block grants. But Congressional Republicans are still saying they will mark up a Medicaid reform proposal this year, and the Administration has not given up. "If they don't get it done this year, they will come back to it next year," says Melanie Nathanson of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP).

Other poverty programs, such as public housing, are also on the chopping block. The Bush Administration is contemplating a radical restructuring of the federal rent voucher program, under which low-income people pay one-third of their rent and the federal government makes up the rest. The voucher program is over-

whelmingly used by working poor families, people with disabilities and elderly people, and helps several million people stave off homelessness each year. In New York

City alone, about 100,000 people use housing vouchers, and there is a waiting list of 150,000.

In fact, thanks to the recession, the use of rent vouchers is rising across the country. But the Bush Administration is planning cutbacks that would leave 184,000 vouchers currently in use across the country without adequate funding to cover them. At the same time, the Administration envisions turning the entire rent voucher program into state-administered block grants. Legislation to accomplish this has been introduced in both houses of Congress. Despite volatile rental housing markets, the block grants would cap funding for vouchers. Vic Bach, housing expert at the Community Service Society, says, "Over time, the vouchers will be devalued and will cease to be an effective way of obtaining affordable housing." The program will be renamed Housing Assistance to Needy Families, an allusion to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the name of the program created by the 1996 welfare reform law. Conservatives such as Howard Husock of the Manhattan Institute dream of the day when there will be time limits and work requirements for public housing, and Michael Liu, an assistant secretary at Housing and Urban Development, has said that the Administration will not prohibit states from setting time limits for public housing. Counties in southern Delaware and Charlotte, North Carolina, are already experimenting with public-housing time limits. Another Bush housing proposal is a \$50 monthly charge for families in public housing with little or no income. But some housing authorities have already tried minimum rents and given up—in one case, according to the CBPP, after tenants were found selling their blood to pay the rent.

Many liberals hoped that Clinton's welfare reform would mean an expansion of assistance for working-poor families—more generous daycare or health benefits, for example. But the Bush Administration is building on the most punitive aspects of the 1996 welfare law, seeking to expand work requirements while

The Bush agenda targets noncash benefits, like healthcare and public housing, that are currently available to working poor people.

tightening access to education and training. Meanwhile, many people who left welfare for jobs during the 1990s boom have lost them as the economy has soured.

For example, 39-year-old Brooklyn resident Rosario Rodriguez left welfare a year ago when she landed a \$6.50-an-hour job making maternity garments at a small Brooklyn factory. She liked the job, she says, even though she worked in a dirty, unheated room, lost her health benefits as she exceeded Medicaid's income limit ("it was a factory job, it had no healthcare") and got only a half-hour lunch break. But after six months, she was laid off as business slowed down.

Now she spends her days at the "job center," New York's euphemistic name for welfare offices, where there aren't any jobs to be found. She says, "My caseworker told me he would pray for me." Rodriguez suspects that she won't be able to find paid work, and will instead have to go into the city's Work Experience Program. Meanwhile, her daughter, a high school student, just had her first baby. Rodriguez would like to help out and stay home with her grandchild, but she fears this would result in a loss of benefits.

It's easy to overlook the connections between Bush's sweeping vision and the program changes of the Clinton years. But when it comes to TANF and to poverty, the two Presidents are very similar—in that both have emphasized work, regardless of its quality, and regardless of whether or not it is stable, pays a living wage or provides health coverage. The marketplace, not the government, is supposed to soothe poverty, even when all the evidence shows that it does not.

Against great odds, low-income activists struggle to fend off these attacks on the remnants of the welfare state. For example, Community Voices Heard, a group representing poor women in upper Manhattan, organizes around economic issues. It has not been an easy time, and activists are deeply frustrated. "A lot of

people on WEP got jobs," said longtime activist Stephen Bradley at an organizing meeting on a rainy mid-May evening—jobs that they've now lost. "They got off welfare, but now they are back on welfare." Politicians, he says, are unresponsive: "We go and we plead our case, but they don't listen." Congressman Charles Rangel, who represents Harlem, has never consented to an in-person meeting with them. Harlem native Lloyd Anderson says, "People need to be able to pay their bills and take care of their children."

Through organizing and lobbying, people have made some advances. This past spring, Community Voices Heard and other community groups won passage of a City Council law that permitted people in WEP to attend college for part of their work requirement—though Mayor Bloomberg promptly vetoed the law. Healthcare for poor people in New York State was threatened with cutbacks, but these were averted when the state raised taxes on upper-income people to maintain Medicaid spending for the poor. And a successful action was held May 14, when about 100 activists thronged the lobby of Club for Growth, an elite Beltway fundraising organization that funnels money to conservative Republicans and pressed for the Bush tax-cut plan. Holding photographs of firehouses that are closing and schools in disrepair, they chanted, "Where's the jobs? Where's the jobs?"

Almost all the forces of the rich and powerful are stacked against them. Right now, Bradley says, "People are desperate. We are like a lost society." His words ring true. As Loretta Gruytch faces life without the medication she needs, and Rosario Rodriguez prays for work, it is hard not to feel as though our whole society has somehow gotten lost. Yet at the same time, despite the array of forces against them, the dedication and courage of these activists in Harlem offer hope for the future. When Lloyd Anderson says, "It's getting ready to get hot," one can only hope that he is right. ■

LETTERS

C O N T I N U E D

(Continued From Page 2)

OINK

Topanga, Calif.

■ As reported in the *Los Angeles Times* in May, the Wall Street firm Goldman Sachs in February provided Richard Perle, the neocon Rasputin, with an audience of investors interested in making millions from the death, destruction and suffering of war. This must be the first case of casting swine before a Perle. MARVIN A. GLUCK

HIGHER ED AS A BASIC RIGHT

Washington, DC

■ Stanley Aronowitz's "Aging Higher Ed" [May 19] is quite right in drawing attention to the harm done by the austerity being imposed by federal and state budget-writers. Likewise, his call for a broad movement (he mentions students, alumni and faculty) to press for access. In fact, the movement that is developing is even broader. Some university presidents have spoken out against the Bush budget; in some states, including North Carolina and Maryland, the universities have turned to grassroots mobilization

to bring a stronger outcry to their legislatures.

Also, noninstructional workers, custodians, secretaries, groundskeepers and technicians are marching and lobbying for higher education funding and the taxes to support it. Their unions include AFSCME, which by convention resolution advocates universal access and higher education as a right, and NEA, AFT and SEIU are the most potent forces in this battle. For today's students and those who would attend tomorrow, the stakes couldn't be higher.

PAUL R. BOOTH, *American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees*

Beaverton, Ore.

■ We are already producing more college graduates than the economy needs. Here in Oregon, the state labor economist reports that 16 percent of job openings require a four-year degree, 3 percent require more than four years of college, 4 percent, a two-year degree, another 4 percent post-high-school training. Meanwhile, 45 percent of all openings require no training or experience. With about one in four US adults holding a four-year college degree, Oregon is

not that different from the rest of the country. While I would like to live in a society that offers a free college education to all, it won't lead to increased earnings and better benefits. We must increase the wages and benefits of the three-fourths of all jobs that do not require a college degree. WILLIAM FOUSTE

HOPE THIS CLEARS THINGS UP

■ Francis Davis, in "Bob Hope, Prisoner of War" [June 30], reported that Hope was awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor—an impossibility, since those go to the military. Hope was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal and named an Honorary Veteran. To confuse matters, he was given a National Patriots Award by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, which presents an annual Bob Hope Award.

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

We regret that the illustration on page 10 of the last issue did not bear the correct name of the artist, Caitlin Dover. Her name did appear, however, in the table of contents. Our apologies.

BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Bourgeois Revolutionary

ROBIN BLACKBURN

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: An American Life.

By Walter Isaacson.

Simon & Schuster. 590 pp. \$30.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

By Edmund S. Morgan.

Yale. 339 pp. \$24.95.

Publishers, even academic presses, know that the public likes biography and cater to this taste with a stream of handsomely produced, and often quite well-written, volumes. Part of the attraction may be that biography is a leveler. Even if one's grasp of the work of great philosophers or statesmen is shaky, one can be fairly sure that their life will bring them down to size. As they used to say: "No man is a hero to his valet." The biographies of American statesmen and Founding Fathers have an added attraction in that they fortify national identity, supplying it with a gallery of imagined ancestors. As with children's bedtime stories, it doesn't matter that the plot twists are known in advance; indeed, this is part of the reassurance they provide. The lives of America's patriot saints are pitched to illustrate civic virtue and point to a contemporary moral. In these books, even quite glaring individual failings only serve to underline the redemptive power of the national idea triumphing over human frailty. Biography can thus easily pander to anti-intellectualism and patriotic piety, failing to register that the past is truly another country. But at least this type of history has a clear narrative line, something that many other brands of history have unwisely abandoned.

Many books have been written about Benjamin Franklin, several in languages other than English. Franklin was the only Founding Father who signed all four of the documents that established the Republic: the Declaration of Independence, the

peace treaty with Britain, the treaty with France and the Constitution. Though he was never President, his role in nourishing colonial self-confidence was unparalleled. Long before he advocated formal independence he was teaching both Americans and their imperial masters that the attempt to rule the colonies from Britain was a folly.

Nevertheless, Franklin's life has posed some problems for patriotic historiography. It was not until he reached almost 70 years of age that he ceased to be a loyal supporter of the British Crown; indeed, for several of these decades he was, as deputy postmaster, a prominent royal officeholder. While his scientific experiments always captured the popular imagination, Franklin's intimate friendships with women other than his wife grated on the eighteenth-century sensibility. The long years he spent in Eng-

A Francophile, a latecomer to the independence struggle and a philanderer, Franklin makes for an unlikely American hero.

land and France can also make him appear to be an offshore American, even though his role in bringing France into the war made a decisive contribution to independence. Though Francophobes may not like the thought, the French alliance not only brought military supplies, trained soldiers and naval power; it made British statesmen see the war in the context of their overriding preoccupation with France, inclining them to an earlier and fairer peace than might otherwise have been obtained. Franklin understood this and used his great prestige as scientist and *philosophe* to promote it.

Franklin's scientific renown and fairly liberal views have always secured for him a niche as the most progressive of the Founding Fathers, assuming, as is usually the case, that Thomas Paine is excluded from their ranks. Franklin both helped and hindered his own legend by writing one of the first secular autobiographies. It furnishes the classic story of the self-made man. In this

Robin Blackburn, Visiting Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Faculty, New School University, is the author of The Making of New World Slavery (Verso).

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and in his other writings, he constructed a vivid image of the striving and thriving "middling people," seen as the true backbone of any healthy social order. Not surprisingly, Max Weber illustrated his famous essays on *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* with many quotations from Franklin's autobiography.

The appearance of two new books on Franklin shows that the legend still has life in it. The full-dress biography by Walter Isaacson fortunately transcends the limits of conventional hagiography, even though the author makes large claims for his subject and extravagant claims for the Republic he helped to create. Isaacson, a former managing editor at *Time*, has written a book whose research and writing would do credit to a professional historian. It helps that he has a strong thesis, even if one takes exception to it, because it connects the life to the larger pattern of events. He portrays Franklin as the exemplar of "an American national identity based on the virtues and values of its middle class," the implicit contrast presumably being with the American identity cultivated by the Virginia gentry.

Isaacson's vivid and readable narrative gives a clear account of Franklin's scientific work, of his extraordinary career as a social innovator, of his labors as a diplomat and statesman, and of the vagaries of his love life. Animated by pride in "American idealism" and "the most successful [constitution] ever written," Isaacson's warm and various book furnishes a portrait that chimes with the recent tidal wave of national feeling. It is given shape and direction by its close attention to the growth of a dynamic civil society, which supplied the wind in Franklin's sails.

Edmund S. Morgan, the *doyen* of colonial historians, has written a biographical essay on Franklin, largely based on his writings, including his voluminous correspondence. Morgan's book, at only about half the length of Isaacson's, does not attempt the same sort of comprehensive treatment of Franklin's life, but it is sometimes better attuned to historical context, and achieves truer perspective on some vital topics. Where Isaacson too readily assumes that Franklin shares our understanding of democracy, Morgan stresses his considerable attachment to the assumptions of eighteenth-century English gentlemen on both sides of the Atlantic, including their great distrust of direct action by "the mob." In the 1760s such attach-

ments led Franklin into taking stands, notably his initial support of the Stamp Act, that he would later see as contrary to American ideals and interests.

Of course, Franklin was a gentleman with a difference. While happy to mingle with aristocracy and royalty, he retained pride in his middling origins, claiming that the name Franklin itself echoed the status of his long line of freeholding ancestors. This much respect for tradition in no way inhibited his extraordinary gift for social innovation, as he founded newspapers, self-help societies, debating clubs, lending libraries, firefighting organizations and colleges. More than a century of development, combined with metropolitan neglect, had brought the North American colonies to the point where there was great pent-up need for such institutions of civil society.

Isaacson sees Franklin as the protagonist of a distinctively middle-class transformation—what Marx called 'the bourgeois revolution.'

As the most successful colonial printer and publisher, Franklin was well-placed to take the initiative, illustrating Benedict Anderson's point about the powerful role of "print capitalism" in the birth of a new horizon of social identity.

Belying his self-portrait as someone obsessed with money and grudging with his time, Franklin often threw himself into these projects with little thought of gain. Likewise, Isaacson reminds us, he never sought to capitalize on his numerous technical inventions, including the famous lightning conductor, by taking out a patent.

Isaacson sees Franklin's scientific genius as essentially pragmatic. Obviously he was not a grand theorist. But neither did he proceed by pragmatic induction and common sense. His account of electricity—of positive and negative charges, of batteries and conductors—was a theoretical system, and he even left it to French experimenters to make the first test of his device for snatching electricity from lightning. His penchant for the counterintuitive was shown in his explanation of why "northeasterlies" actually came from the southwest.

Franklin's social initiatives also had an experimental quality. He was not a great orator and often shied away from the limelight. Instead, using one of his pseudonyms, he would propose some new measure and then lobby behind the scenes for others to make it their own. His keen sense of how society might be transformed for the better

was vindicated time after time and helped to remove the social prejudices that blinkered other gentlemen-philosophes. Thus when he proposed a militia for Philadelphia he insisted that officers be elected, because this was likely to promote volunteers for the new body. But he confidently predicted that the militia would express the social leadership of "we, the middling people... the tradesmen, shopkeepers and farmers of this province and city!"

Isaacson's larger argument that Franklin was the protagonist of a distinctively middle-class transformation takes its cue from Gordon Wood, in particular his book *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1991). While leftists will have an important demurrer to enter at some of the claims made, many will recognize the old Marxist notion of the "bourgeois democratic revolution," alive and kicking notwithstanding the toil of sundry historical revisionists. In fact, it is difficult to make

overall sense of much modern history if one discards this concept. Such major recent books as Robert Brenner's *Merchants and Revolution*, John Markoff's *The Abolition of Feudalism* and even, in a different way, Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* all fall into place only if we see in them the moving spirit of bourgeois revolution. Since Marx himself borrowed the concept (from Guizot, the Orleanist statesman and historian, and Abbé Sieyès, the revolutionary of 1789, who insisted that the future belonged to the "Third Estate"), leftists cannot really complain that it has been reappropriated by partisans of neoliberalism.

The problem with the concept is that bourgeois revolutions were more hybrid and flawed than the theory allowed. It wasn't just that many bourgeois lacked the courage of the revolutionaries. It was also that the early, burgeoning capitalist order was deeply indebted to practices, such as slaveholding and Indian removal, that were not at all liberal or democratic.

Franklin in his later life became a critic of slavery, but Morgan, author of the classic *American Slavery, American Freedom*, registers better than Isaacson both Franklin's racial assumptions and the mildness of his opposition to slavery. Thus Isaacson cites antislavery remarks made by Franklin in letters to Benjamin Rush and Anthony Benezet without noting that he was not exactly breaking new ground by chiming in with the well-known views of these two early abolitionists. Never-

theless, by the late 1780s, Franklin did have a keen sense that a revived slavery would compromise the future of the young Republic.

This also has a bearing on Isaacson's claim that the US Constitution has been "the most successful ever written," a claim that would, if true, belie Franklin's own profound reservations at the time. Franklin favored proportional representation and a single representative chamber, and consequently at first opposed the power conferred on the President and the setting up of the Senate. He was one of the few to challenge the clauses giving special treatment to slaveholders and also to insist that the federal government ought to be able to tax the rich more heavily than the poor. While he had forebodings, his eventual and reluctant support for the compromises of 1787 was motivated by his view that, like other human arrangements, it was provisional and temporary, and could soon be improved on, and when he did at last publicly take up the slavery issue it was to underline this fact. So the ongoing project to sacralize the Constitution is not a Franklinian enterprise. While we cannot possibly know what Franklin would have made of the Civil War, with its 600,000 dead, it scarcely ranks as a triumph for the Constitution. Likewise the sustained exclusion and oppression of African-Americans and Native Americans, and the lack of restraint on imperial adventures.

America's "middle-class revolution" took an inordinately long time to deliver on its promise and imposed heavy costs even when it did so. Often its genuine successes owed much to numbers of obscure individuals who will not have biographies written about them. Franklin's own representations in the courts of Europe required such backing, and sometimes helped to shape his views. Franklin tolerated British tax proposals until the protests of the patriot mob taught him otherwise. For the spirit of popular rebellion we need to consult books like *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000), by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, rather than these biographies. But we should not forget that the momentous sweep of Atlantic revolution involved an interaction. Sometimes Franklin's disdain for the mob was commendable—for example, his denunciation of the Indian-killing "Paxton Boys." At other times he strongly endorsed the radical democratic impulse, as when he backed Paine in the writing and publication of *Common Sense* or when he supported the contention at the Pennsylvania Constitu-

tional Convention that "an enormous Proportion of Property vested in a few Individuals is dangerous to the Rights, and destructive of the Common Happiness, of Mankind; and therefore every free State hath a Right by its Laws to discourage the Possession of such Property."

These lives of Franklin are most valuable if read as part of a broader history. Both show that Franklin clung to his own notion of empire as a union of equals until almost the very end. But they also show that as the

choice between empire and independence was posed, and despite having reached the age of 69, Franklin threw himself wholeheartedly into the anti-imperial struggle. After all, so much of his life and work had reflected a belief in self-determination and in the notion that people are elevated by their own efforts. As the first country to defy modern empire becomes the last to practice imperial rule, the legacy of Franklin acquires a new message, and becomes subversive all over again. ■

Lady Day

HERMAN SCHWARTZ

THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW. By Sandra Day O'Connor. Random House. 330 pp. \$25.95.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's new book, *The Majesty of the Law*, appears at a particularly auspicious moment. As the swing vote on and author of *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the Supreme Court's 5-to-4 decision in June upholding the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action program, she has

shaped the future of minority education in America's universities for years to come. Also, she is the first female Justice. The book is thus a timely statement by a powerful judge at a time when the judiciary has more power than ever. The situation is also rife with irony. Ever since Ronald Reagan, Republicans have fiercely opposed affirmative action programs for racial minorities and women. They have shed tears over the harm to self-esteem that the beneficiaries of these programs have supposedly suffered, expressed grave concerns over the tensions that affirmative action has fomented between blacks and whites, and denigrated diversity and all the other justifications put forth for these programs.

All that is conveniently forgotten, however, when a little affirmative action will bring a lot of political profit. The most prominent uses of affirmative action in the past twenty-five years were actually by Republicans: the nominations of O'Connor by Reagan and of Clarence Thomas by George H.W. Bush. On any gender- or color-blind list, neither would have appeared. Thomas was an undistinguished federal appellate judge in Washington, and an unimpressive chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; O'Connor was an obscure midlevel Arizona

state judge and former state legislator with no outstanding reputation among Arizona lawyers. She herself has acknowledged to NPR reporter Nina Totenberg that she was the beneficiary of affirmative action.

Like so many other affirmative-action candidates given an opportunity to show what they can do, Justice O'Connor has proved her merit, becoming an able and important jurist. Now, two decades after her appointment, she has written a book that, she says, is "the result of more than twenty years of thinking about and speaking about some of the major themes in our national history and the principal challenges facing our world today."

A book by a Supreme Court Justice with so grand a title and that claims to be the product of so much experience and thought should be an important event. One expects insights, reflections, insider discussions of problems and anecdotes about this powerful institution, especially about what it has been like for the first woman to enter the previously all-male sanctum sanctorum of American law.

O'Connor's book will, alas, be a disappointment to anyone looking to learn something about the Supreme Court that is not already common knowledge. The chapters are short and barely skim the surface. Part 1, on "Life on the Court," contains little that is new or interesting, except for a chapter on an early fight among those who collected and published the Court's decisions. The second and third parts con-

Herman Schwartz, a professor of law at the American University, is the editor of The Rehnquist Court: Judicial Activism on the Right (Hill & Wang).



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In 1923 a small watchmaker in Europe built the first watch to display the day and date while using an automatic movement. Only 7 of these watches were ever made and we've only actually seen one of these masterpieces in a watch history book. Antique experts say these watches are so rare that they could fetch more than \$500,000 at auction today.

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sist of some historical vignettes and of profiles of six earlier Justices, including praise for Chief Justices William Howard Taft and Warren Burger for improving the efficiency of the federal court system. Subsequent chapters deal with women and the law, lawyers and courts, and the rule of law in the twenty-first century. There are a few interesting historical vignettes, tributes to some of her predecessors and some sensible ideas about juries and the need for judges to consider what is happening elsewhere in the world. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is nothing about *Bush v. Gore* (2000), the harsh reaction to which by many lawyers is said to have shocked her. The book catches fire only once, and that is when she discusses women's issues. Her inability to find a job other than as a legal secretary when she graduated near the top of her Stanford Law School class in 1952 still rankles; she has often talked about it elsewhere, and she mentions it at least twice in the book.

What is startling about *The Majesty of the Law* is that readers unacquainted with her record on the Court would conclude that she is one of its liberals, rather than a very conservative judge who, from time to time, drifts away from her colleagues on the right. Over and over again, she praises advances in individual rights that from her first days on the Court, she and her allies—William Rehnquist and, later, Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy and Clarence Thomas—have worked to undermine. It's true that O'Connor sometimes appears to the casual observer of the Rehnquist Court to be something of a moderate, and her vote in the Michigan Law School case and in a few other cases will certainly reinforce that impression. However, except in a few notable instances, her differences with her fellow conservatives have been over nuance and reasoning.

The gap between what she writes in this book and how she votes can be seen in such matters as access to the courts, civil rights and criminal justice. For example, in a chapter on how the law has evolved, O'Connor writes:

In our system—and our experience has proved its efficacy—it is the citizens themselves, through the courts, who enforce their rights. Enforcement is entrusted not to other government branches, agencies, or commissions that lack a personal stake in the aggrieved party's freedom but to the people.

Yet, since joining the Court in 1981, she

has been a leader in shutting the courthouse door to civil rights litigants and others. One technique is to create restrictive "standing" rules that determine who will be allowed to go to federal court to challenge a violation of the law. One of the leading cases is the decision she wrote in *Allen v. Wright* (1984), refusing to allow black parents to challenge the IRS's grant of tax-exempt status to racially discriminatory private schools. Ignoring detailed evidence that the exemption enabled whites to avoid going to school with black students in Memphis and elsewhere, she ruled that the black parents had not shown what she considered constitutional "injury." But when some white voters challenged majority-black election districts in North Carolina in *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), Justice O'Connor—again writing for a five-member majority—allowed the suit to go forward even though the plaintiffs did not even claim to have been injured. She has also been a solidly reliable member of the 5-to-4 bloc, led by Rehnquist, that has elevated the long-discredited "king can do no wrong" doctrine of sovereign immunity, which bars suits against government except with its consent. Using this doctrine, they have blocked suits by disabled, elderly and other people whose rights have been violated by state governments.

Equally suspect is O'Connor's lament about the continuing "great and crying need for legal services for the poor," and concern about the widespread perception "that justice is reserved for the powerful, the educated, the elite." In *Legal Services Corp. v. Velasquez* (2001), perhaps the most important legal services case in years, she dissented from a 5-to-4 ruling striking down a Legal Services Corporation regulation that forbade legal services lawyers to challenge welfare laws as unconstitutional or illegal. In another case that year, she joined a 5-to-4 majority that refused to allow attorneys' fees, the lifeblood of civil rights laws, to a lawyer who forced West Virginia to repeal a law that violated the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, rather than defend it in court; the repeal gave the clients all they wanted. Ignoring the clear purpose of the law and the plain meaning of the words "prevailing party," the Supreme Court ruled that unless the lawyer obtained some kind of court judgment, he was not entitled to attorneys' fees from the state. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said in her dissent, the decision will "impede access to the court for the less well-heeled, and shrink the incentive Congress created for the en-

forcement of federal law by private attorneys general."

Even when poor people do have a lawyer, the level of representation is often miserable. One-third of the people sentenced to death in Illinois, Kentucky and Texas were represented at their capital trials by lawyers who were later disbarred, suspended or convicted of crimes. Courts have even upheld convictions and death sentences in which court-appointed lawyers were drunk or asleep during the trial. In *The Majesty of the Law*, O'Connor bemoans the decline in lawyer professionalism, but in *Strickland v. Washington* (1984), she wrote the opinion setting a very lax standard for the competence of counsel, even in death-penalty cases. In only two of the many cases challenging the competence of counsel in capital cases that have come before her since then has she found that the lawyer fell below the *Strickland* standard.

Death-penalty cases represent merely one aspect of her overall criminal justice record. Here too, despite approving the Warren Court decisions granting rights to the criminally accused, she has consistently undermined these decisions by crafting exceptions to the *Miranda* rule and

voting for other ways for the police to evade these rulings. In *Whren v. United States* (1996) and *Illinois v. Wardlow* (2000), for example, she joined two decisions that will make racial profiling by the police easier than ever.

In *The Majesty of the Law*, O'Connor praises Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes for his efforts to open the federal courts for habeas corpus petitions by state prisoners whose constitutional rights were violated. Yet it is she who has written the most important decisions shutting the federal courts to state prisoners, often for the most minor procedural slips by their lawyers. Filing deadlines missed by a few days, omitted claims, a lawyer's failure to raise objections or present mitigating circumstances, even prosecution misconduct or plausible claims of innocence—almost nothing will allow a prison inmate to get into federal court unless he can re-create the past and "show that there is a reasonable probability that, but for counsel's unprofessional errors, the result would have been different." She casually notes that the Court "has tinkered continuously with the finer points of the scope of habeas corpus," but this "tinkering" has sent many people to their death, some of whom may well have been innocent or at least did not deserve the

ultimate penalty. Thanks to DNA, over a hundred death-row inmates have been exonerated so far—from among those still living.

Another glaring inconsistency between what she writes and how she rules is her call for "an educated citizenry," particularly among the poor. "Although decent public education and job-creation programs strain government resources and taxpayers' wallets," she writes, "their absence may engender even greater burdens: crime, homelessness, drugs, violence, alienation, despair. We cannot allow our children to languish." This kind of argument persuaded the normally conservative Lewis Powell, in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), to join a 5-to-4 majority forcing Texas to provide a free public education to the children of illegal aliens. O'Connor, however, dissented. And six years later, in *Kadrmas v. Dickinson* (1988), she wrote for a 5-to-4 majority allowing North Dakota to deny free public transportation to indigent children whose school district had not been included in a school-district consolidation even though they had to travel sixteen miles to school. Her indifference to the plight of the poor is also reflected in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), the decision that preserved a woman's right to have an abortion. While

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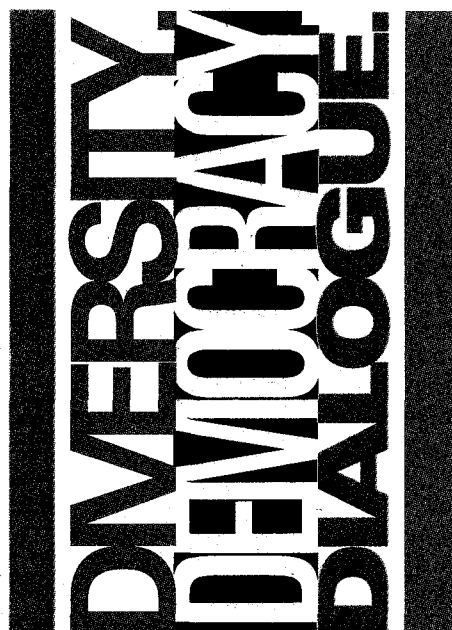
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the decision kept *Roe v. Wade* alive, it allowed states and localities to impose waiting periods and other obstacles that fall particularly hard on the poor.

With the exception of the Michigan Law School case, O'Connor's record on civil rights reveals an even more striking gap between rhetoric and reality. In her chapter on Thurgood Marshall, she praises *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for "finally acknowledg[ing] the need to give meaning to the Framers' promises of equality." But in cases affecting black people and other racial and ethnic minorities, she has consistently undermined efforts to protect them against discrimination and to remedy the results of our sorry past.

Numbers tell the story best. In her first sixteen years on the Court, O'Connor voted in some sixty-seven cases dealing directly and specifically with the rights of racial and other minorities. Of these, twenty-six cases were decided either unanimously, by 8 to 1, or by 7 to 2, with forty-one sharply split racial decisions. Putting aside for the moment the twenty-six decisions decided by unanimous, 8-to-1 or 7-to-2 votes, where she voted for minorities sixteen times, O'Connor voted against the minority litigant in thirty-nine of the forty-one close cases involving race. These cases dealt with almost every legal issue related to racial justice, including voting rights, employment, school desegregation, affirmative action, the scope of enforcement for federal civil rights statutes, jury selection and capital punishment. In the past five years the Court has taken very few race cases, but the pattern of her voting and opinions is similar.

On gay rights, O'Connor's record is mixed at best. She helped to make the five-member majority in the infamous *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision in 1986, allowing gay sex to be made criminal. On the other hand, she joined in the *Romer v. Evans* (1996) decision striking down the Colorado initiative barring protection for gays against discrimination. But in the landmark *Lawrence v. Texas* decision in June overturning *Bowers* and striking down all sodomy laws, contrary to the general opinion, she did not join the majority. In a separate opinion, she voted to annul only the four laws singling out homosexual sex. Had her view carried the day, this would have left in place nine state laws that cover both homosexual and heterosexual sodomy.

There is another criterion for evaluating her record, covering the entire range of cases before the Court during the past twenty

years: with which colleague has Justice O'Connor voted most frequently? According to the annual statistical compilation of voting alignments by the *Harvard Law Review*, it is Rehnquist. In thirteen of those years, Rehnquist was her number-one ally, and in six he was second. No one has ever called Rehnquist a "centrist" in racial matters or any other. O'Connor's rhetoric and record reflect white America's attitude toward racial problems: much talk about the need to remedy what she herself has described as "the unhappy persistence of both the practice and the lingering effects of racial discrimination," but a consistent rejection of concrete steps toward achieving that goal.

The most prominent example is affirmative action. Until the *Grutter* case she had not approved a single affirmative-action plan designed to help racial minorities, whether in employment, government contracts, education or electoral districting. In 1988, when Anthony Kennedy took his seat and the conservatives finally had a solid majority against racial preferences, she wrote the leading decision overturning the many Burger Court rulings upholding such preferences. In her opinion in *City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.* (1989), she nailed into the Constitution the principle that an action taken in order to help blacks and other racial minorities is to be viewed with the same skepticism as actions that hurt them: It will be found unconstitutional unless it meets a compelling public need and is narrowly tailored to meet that need. The result was to make it very difficult to grant such preferences in any context. Her future ally in these matters, Justice Thomas, put the underlying principle quite bluntly: "There is a moral [and] constitutional equivalence...between laws designed to subjugate a race and those that distribute benefits on the basis of race in order to foster some current notions of equality." In other words, race-conscious measures intended to help minorities beaten down for centuries are as wrong as the racist measures that beat them down.

The Michigan Law School case is the sole racial affirmative-action case to break this pattern. In essence, she adopted the approach taken by Justice Lewis Powell in *Regents of University of California v. Bakke* (1978), where he laid out a road map for universities to follow in which race could be considered a plus factor so long as other factors like background, personal history and other achievements were also considered in a system that analyzed each application individually. O'Connor's opinion

sets out in detail the major reasons for treating the Michigan Law School case differently from her prior rulings. She noted the enormous support for affirmative action in business, and among colleges and universities, most notably the military service academies. She also stressed the importance of a law degree in obtaining access to positions of leadership in our society.

In the other Michigan case, involving a point system in which minority status was given twenty points out of 150, she reverted to form and voted against the program. It was not individualized enough for her, even though the university claimed that in many cases, the point system served as a screen for further consideration by a faculty committee. Of course, since the college could not know in advance the number of students who would benefit from the extra twenty points, the system could not readily produce the fixed number associated with a quota.

Still, one cannot overstate the importance of her vote and opinion in the law school case. The decision has preserved the opportunity for racial and ethnic minorities to obtain a graduate education and will probably not be too hard to follow. Its impact in other contexts, as in government contracts and employment, is quite uncertain, however, since the case for diversity in both *Bakke* and *Grutter* was linked to the academic setting. A court sympathetic to racial minorities would find *Grutter* useful for these other settings, but neither this Court nor Justice O'Connor has shown such sympathy.

In only one case other than the Michigan Law School case has she voted to uphold a preference—a decision by the Santa Clara, California, Transportation Authority that chose a woman over a man for a road dispatcher's job. This is not surprising. O'Connor is a very strong advocate for women's rights, and this is the one area where her book reveals a passion for social justice. The discussion is thoughtful, informed and vigorously argued. Her treatment of the suffrage movement contains vivid, detailed descriptions of the struggles for the right to vote, and of heroines like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and some less well-known women (at least to this male) like Lorna Lockwood, who became Chief Justice in Arizona in 1965.

O'Connor's rulings reflect this feminism. Since coming to the Court, she has consistently voted for women's rights in numerous cases and has expressed considerable judicial skepticism toward laws that disadvantage women. She has persuaded the Court to insist that such laws be struck

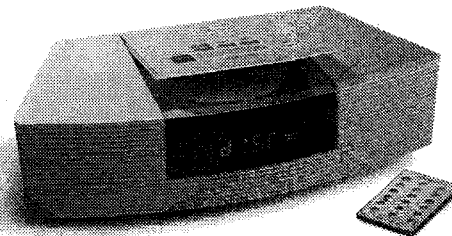
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down unless they are supported by an “exceedingly persuasive justification”; the only abortion regulation that she voted to nullify in the *Casey* abortion decision was a requirement that a woman notify her husband before getting the abortion. And one of her very rare votes to allow someone to sue a state under a federal law, this term’s decision upholding the Family and Medical Leave Act, came in a decision intended to eliminate employment discrimination

against women by requiring paternity as well as maternity leave.

Justice O’Connor has won plaudits for her opinion in the Michigan Law School case, and deservedly so. But that’s hardly enough to sustain the liberal self-image she projects in her memoir. By and large, Ronald Reagan got what he wanted when he nominated O’Connor to the Supreme Court—a judge who is both a woman and a conservative. ■

Written in Memory

MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ

THE STORY OF MY LIFE. By Helen Keller.

Edited by Roger Shattuck with Dorothy Herrmann. Norton. 471 pp. \$24.95.

Helen Keller may be the world’s most famous supercrip. Very few people can claim to have “overcome” disability so thoroughly and spectacularly. A blind and deaf wild child at the age of 7, she became, by the time she published *The Story of My Life* at 22, one of Radcliffe’s most successful and polished

students, fluent in Latin, Greek, German, French and (not least) English—not to mention three versions of Braille (English, American, New York Point) and the manual alphabet in which her renowned teacher Anne Sullivan first communicated with her. But let me dispense with the scare quotes for a moment. Helen Keller is famous—and justly so—precisely because she did, in many respects, overcome the physical impairments of deafness and blindness, as well as the formidable social obstacles facing people with disabilities at the end of the nineteenth century. Her story retains its power to startle and inspire even now, just as Anne Sullivan’s story remains among the most startling and inspiring tales in the history of pedagogy.

Keller’s story is also a member of the genre of disability autobiographies in which the writing of one’s life story takes on the characteristics of what the philosopher J.L. Austin called “performative” utterances: The primary function of *The Story of My Life*, in this sense, is to let readers know that its author is capable of telling the story of her life. The point is hardly a trivial one. Helen Keller was dogged nearly all her life by the charge that she was little more than a ventriloquist’s dummy—a mouthpiece for Anne Sullivan, or, later, for the original editor of *The Story of My Life*, the socialist literary critic John Macy,

who married Sullivan in 1905. And even for those who know better than to see Helen Keller as disability’s Charlie McCarthy, her education and her astonishing facility with languages nevertheless raise troubling and fascinating questions about subjectivity, individuality and language. Roger Shattuck and Dorothy Herrmann’s new edition of *The Story of My Life*—supplemented as it is with Anne Sullivan’s narrative, John Macy’s accounts of the book and of Keller’s life, Keller’s letters and Shattuck’s afterword—not only restores Keller’s original text but highlights questions about originality and texts—questions that defined Keller’s relation to language from the age of 12, when she published a story titled “The Frost King.”

The episode is largely forgotten now, but in 1892 it was a national scandal of Jayson Blair proportions; and just as Blair’s detractors opportunistically parlayed his story into an indictment of affirmative action, so too did Keller’s critics take the “Frost King” incident as proof of the fraudulence of claims that deaf and blind children could be taught just like anyone else. Keller and Sullivan had become famous within a year of Sullivan’s arrival at Keller’s house in Tuscumbia, Alabama, in 1887, and Keller’s remarkable achievements had already been blown out of all proportion, as if she had spontaneously learned to speak and write fluently the moment Sullivan spelled “w-a-t-e-r” into little Helen’s hand at the Kellers’ water pump. When,

therefore, the miracle girl published a darling little story about King Jack Frost, the fairies and the precious stones that created the colors of autumn, it was something of a sensation—and a still greater sensation when the nation learned that the story included extended passages from a story written years earlier by Margaret Canby.

Fully half of John Macy’s sixty-page account of Keller is devoted to the “Frost King” scandal; his discussion includes not only Keller’s story, printed side by side with Canby’s, but also passages from Keller’s letters, in which the then-9-year-old girl unwittingly yet accurately cribs from yet another Canby story and a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes. I don’t have the space to convey an adequate idea of what Keller did with the minute details of Canby’s stories, so you’ll have to take my word for it: Keller’s achievement—and it was an achievement—is nothing short of eerie. Apparently she memorized, by way of the manual alphabet, the precise language of short stories read to her by a friend in the summer of 1888; she then forgot that she had ever heard of the stories, and quite sincerely believed “The Frost King” to be her own when she published it four years later.

Now, my 11-year-old son, Jamie, despite his developmental disability, can recite whole stretches of *Shrek*, *Galaxy Quest* and both Harry Potter movies, complete with appropriate gestures and sound effects. So I’m not easily impressed by this kind of thing. But Helen Keller’s powers of recall were almost beyond belief. Margaret Canby herself said as much, writing, “Under the circumstances, I do not see how any one can be so unkind as to call it a plagiarism; it is a wonderful feat of memory.” This is a fair and judicious response, much fairer and more judicious than the bizarre abreaction of Keller’s earliest and strongest supporter, Michael Anagnos, who was undone by the “Frost King” episode and eventually declared that “Helen Keller is a living lie.” And yet it raises a profound question: What if all Helen Keller’s utterances amounted to wonderful feats of memory? What if Helen Keller’s education, focused as it was on the skills of reading and writing, amounted to a kind of program for an artificial intelligence—an intelligence designed to understand, memorize and generate language?

James Berger points out in a recent issue of *Arizona Quarterly* that these questions hover over Richard Powers’s 1995 novel *Galatea 2.2*, in which a computer named

Michael Bérubé is the Paterno Family Professor in Literature at Pennsylvania State University.

Helen is programmed to pass an MA exam in English literature. The idea of Helen Keller as an AI—not a supercrip, but a cyborg—is an unsettling one, but Keller's letters (also included in this edition) render it plausible: Once Anne Sullivan had given her the tools, Keller went from writing "Helen will write mother letter papa did give helen medicine mildred will sit in swing mildred did kiss helen" in July 1887 to writing "Mon cher Monsieur Anagnos, I am sitting by the window and the beautiful sun is shining on me Teacher and I came to the kindergarten yesterday" in October 1888. Sullivan, to her credit, believed firmly that children learn language by imitation, and so decided from the outset to use full sentences when conversing with Helen, regardless of whether she would understand every word. (Sullivan's criticisms of rote pedagogical exercises are among the highlights of the book, as pertinent now as in 1903.) For "what would happen," Sullivan asks in an 1888 letter, "if some one should try to measure our intelligence by our ability to define the commonest words we use? I fear me, if I were put to such a test, I should be consigned to the primary class in a school for the feeble-minded."

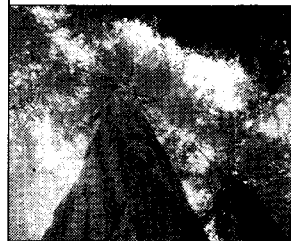
The fascinating result is that Helen learned by imitating all the forms of language she encountered, and filling in the gaps as best she could—as when her mother told her that her grandfather was dead, and she replied, "Did father shoot him? I will eat grandfather for dinner." "So far," Sullivan explains, "her only knowledge of death is in connection with things to eat. She knows that her father shoots partridges and deer and other game." At these early stages, Helen's miscues sound more like program errors than like the gropings of a child.

And as she grew, Helen was increasingly haunted by the possibility that her subjectivity consisted of a string of textual citations. She never really got over "The Frost King." "Indeed," she writes, "I have ever since been tortured by the fear that what I write is not my own. For a long time, when I wrote a letter, even to my mother, I was seized with a sudden feeling, and I would spell the sentences over and over, to make sure that I had not read them in a book.... It is certain that I cannot always distinguish my own thoughts from those I read, because what I read become the very substance and texture of my mind." Referring to her writing as a "crazy patchwork" and a "Chinese puzzle," Keller pushes herself further and further toward an odd, proto-deconstructionist argument about

the role of "iterability" in language, just as John Macy, in his remarks, flirts with the proposition that people are spoken through by linguistic forms. (No, he doesn't sound like a turn-of-the-century Derrida, but he does suggest that "the medium calls forth the thing it conveys, and the greater the medium the deeper the thoughts.") It does not help matters, to say the least, that Keller's writing is so deliberately and widely allusive: Describing her empathy for Homer, she calls him "a man acquainted with sorrow," drawing on Isaiah 53:3; referring to her childhood before Sullivan's arrival, she writes of living in the "shadows of the prison-house." The phrase comes from Wordsworth's ode: "Intimations of Immortality," but (as Shattuck notes) Keller bends it to her own purpose: Where Wordsworth refers to the process by which conventional adult life gradually numbs the child who had entered the world trailing clouds of glory, Keller suggests that she was led out of the prison-house of her early childhood and into the adult world—most important, the world of human language, which, contrary to what you may have heard elsewhere, turns out to be no prison-house at all.

Indeed, by the time she was 22, Keller's accomplishments in language had surpassed those of most of her fellow humans, not least because she had by then become acquainted with such a rich variety of writers in the modern and ancient languages. All too often, Keller's intellectual legacy has been treated as a matter of debits and credits: points for her advocacy of socialism and her ability to inspire; points off for her advocacy of eugenics and her opposition to sign-language education for deaf children. But it can also be said that Keller's life, together with her life's writing, testifies to the power—and the utility—of an education dedicated to reading the world's most challenging writers. She began by memorizing and imitating the treacly *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and children's stories about frost fairies, and she wound up weaving a crazy patchwork of sensations and expressions from Homer and the Bible, Molière and Goethe, Carlyle and Schiller, Shakespeare and Wordsworth. Keller's is more than just the story of a precocious supercrip; it is one of world literature's most extraordinary narratives about disability, education and language. Perhaps *The Story of My Life* derives its power from its author's distinctiveness, or perhaps its distinctiveness lies in its acute awareness that we are all, to one degree or another, derivative. Either way, it is a story worth committing to our collective memory. ■

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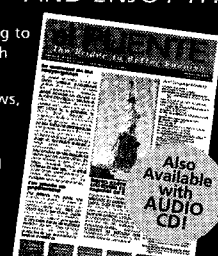
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Charlotte's Web

VIVIAN GORNICK

THE CRUX. By Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Introduction by Dana Seitler.
Duke. 171 pp. \$16.95.

In 1890 the American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote a remarkable short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," about a woman—genteel, educated, with more than a casual taste for intellectual life—who is suffering from an indefinable malady, a nervous complaint. Her husband, a kind, intelligent

doctor, has brought her to a beautiful country house for three months of the complete rest he knows will lead to recovery. The room to which he guides our narrator is a third-floor nursery with lovely views, bars on the windows and, on its walls, a peeling, figured yellow wallpaper that the woman hates on sight: the color a sickly hue, odious to her, the design repellent.

The days and nights pass without purpose or occupation. Instead of getting better, the narrator seems to be getting worse. She suggests that perhaps if she could visit some stimulating friends or have congenial work she would progress. No, her husband insists, exactly the opposite. All the famous doctors of the time are agreed on this question: There is nothing worse for someone in her condition than stimulation.

Against her will, the narrator's attention is drawn, repeatedly and obsessively, to the hateful yellow wallpaper. She soon concludes that there are two layers of paper, and at night the upper one moves. Then she sees the figure of a woman trapped between the layers. The upper layer is moving because she is shaking it, as though in an effort to release herself.

In time, the narrator becomes convinced that during the day the woman inside the paper is actually creeping about, bent low to the ground—but at night she is back inside her wallpaper prison. She determines to free the woman behind the wallpaper and begins tearing at it, removing it in long, narrow strips. Then, suddenly, she makes common cause with her, and with great cunning and secrecy, the narrator herself takes to creeping about the old nursery into which she has now locked herself. At the very last, when the husband breaks in on her, the narrator is crawling about on all fours—irredeemably mad.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" was published in 1892 in *The New England Magazine*, and then later reprinted in 1920 by William Dean Howells in *The Great Modern Ameri-*

can Stories. On both occasions, it was damned by moral uplifters, praised by lovers of literary grotesquerie and said by medical doctors to constitute an accurate account of incipient insanity. Today, we read the story as a metaphor for nineteenth-century marriage for a woman, and it is experienced almost universally as a minor masterpiece. Never before and never again was its prolific author to produce another piece of literary writing to equal it.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was born in Connecticut in 1860. Her father, a great-nephew of Harriet Beecher Stowe, deserted the family when she was 9, and the Perkins children grew up in poverty and social exclusion. But Charlotte read voraciously, had artistic talent and educated herself sufficiently to study for two years at the Rhode Island School of Design. In 1884 she married a fellow artist, Charles Stetson, and quickly became pregnant and bore a child, after which she fell into the kind of depression her famous story details. Within a few years she had divorced her husband, urged him to marry her closest friend and announced that it was best that they raise the child; she herself was going west. In California she began to think, lecture and write the steady stream of work that poured out of her for the rest of her life—novels, stories, and a vast amount of social criticism on economics, religion, education and equality for women. In 1900 she married her first cousin, George Gilman, a New York lawyer; in 1909 she founded her own monthly, *The Forerunner*. In 1935, suffering from incurable cancer, she committed suicide. Today, she is almost entirely unknown except to feminists, and aside from the celebrated story, all that work (except for the scholarly *Women and Economics*) long forgotten.

Gilman's *The Crux*, a short novel first published serially in 1910, is now being reprinted by Duke University Press, and while it is not a good novel—the pacing is crude, the writing inadequate, the didacticism an embarrassment—it is nonetheless a very interesting one, especially if you are a haunted reader of "The Yellow Wallpaper." Read-

Vivian Gornick is the author of *The Situation* and *The Story: The Art of Personal Narrative*.

ing it is akin to poring over the sketches that (early and late) might surround the full-length work of the one-book writer. It allows us to trace in its pages evidence, scattered throughout, of the talent that ran restless in its author throughout her stormy, stubborn, furiously engaged years, yet flared into fully achieved life but once. Here, in many random passages, we have a parable of talent: Like love, it is necessary but insufficient.

The Crux tells the story of a group of women who are perishing for lack of adventure, useful occupation, connection of the spirit—you name it, they don't have it—in a small, morbidly respectable New England town at the turn of the past century. On impulse, they get on a train (there are five of them) and head for a mining town in Colorado to run a boardinghouse for the many rough but good men wandering around out West, also in search of a real life.

The major character among the women is Vivian Lane: young, handsome, yearning, intelligent. In Colorado she meets up again with Morton Elder, the handsome brother and nephew of two of her companions, and the man who as a boy had awakened sexual longing in her before he left for the fabled West. Now, nine years later, we see Elder as a lost soul, his life winding down in failure and disappointment, fastening on to Vivian as a figure of romantic salvation. She, long devoted to her girlish memories of Morton, is startled to find that her feelings are now distinctly mixed. Yet she agrees to marry him, and suffers when told by no less than three of the many women around her that she dare not marry Morton, as they know for certain that he has had syphilis and gonorrhea. She's not to even think of bringing into the world the children who would emerge from such a defective heritage. Vivian breaks the engagement, plunges into despair, is fired in the crucible of spiritual loneliness, then rescues herself through work as a schoolteacher and, at the last, is happily united with a high-minded, brooding doctor whom Gilman has had waiting in the wings for a couple of chapters. The novel ends, absurdly, with almost every woman with whom Vivian came to Colorado getting married, and the one "phony" among them leaving town.

At the didactic heart of the tale being told lies the monumental ignorance then surrounding the subject of sexually transmitted disease and Gilman's angry endorsement of a social policy that would forcibly prevent the Morton Elders of the world from procreating. Other prominent feminists of her generation, including Margaret Sanger, shared this now alarming view, often because they could make no headway in breaking the Victorian code of silence that

consigned so many lives to a hell distinctly not of their own making. In her 1910 preface Gilman observes flatly if not fluently, "If some say 'Innocence is the greatest charm of young girls' the answer is 'What good does it do them?'"

Yet there are moments in this polemics-driven tale when Gilman becomes what she is consistently in "The Yellow Wallpaper": an inward-looking writer. She feels keenly, on behalf of her character, the isolation of the one who, endowed with gifts of mind and spirit, must live among the many who have none. She writes with sympathy of the irresolution of divided feelings. She knows what it means to bear loneliness in the absence of a purposeful life, and then again in its presence. Here is Vivian at home in New England.

She felt the crushing cramp and loneliness of a young mind, really stronger than those about her, yet held in dumb subjection.... This flat, narrow life, so long, so endlessly long—would nothing ever end it?

Or again, relieved after her engagement is broken, yet:

She quite forgot that she had always shrunk from [him] when he made love too warmly...[that it was] the unreasonable voice of the woman's nature within her had answered, though but partially, to the deep call of the man's; and now she missed more than she would admit to herself the tenderness that was gone.

And finally:

The sense...of a dull, long, narrow path between her and the grave, which had so oppressed the girl's spirit, now changed rapidly.... Here was work; something to do; something to think about.... she was lonely, unquestionably.... She was lonely and a single woman—but she had something to do; and far more power to do it, more interest, enthusiasm, and skill, than at the season's beginning.... From black and bitter agony to the gray tastelessness of her present life was not an exciting change, but Vivian had more power in quiet endurance than in immediate resistance, and set herself now in earnest to fulfill the tasks before her.

These are the kinds of paragraphs around which a Willa Cather or a Kate Chopin formed an entire working life. For Gilman, such resonant preoccupation with the concerns of what Cather called "the inviolable self" carried the day but once. Her strength is derived from an ongoing, indiscriminate outrage at a world riding roughshod over that very self—with the emphasis on the world; it does not come from the

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FILMS

Badlands

STUART KLAWANS

THE HOLY LAND • MY TERRORIST • THE CUCKOO • MADAME SATĀ

It's always good fun to see a boy wax romantic over the first girl to give him a handjob—and if the boy should be a black-hatted Jew, the fun is only improved. For secular viewers, there's the hint of a freak show to the proceedings; for those of us with religious ties, the delicious *frisson* of self-recognition.

And what if the yeshiva boy has preserved his pallor despite a Mediterranean sun? Then you've got Eitan Gorlin's first feature, *The Holy Land*: a sometimes heart-broken, sometimes furious coming-of-age drama, set in a bleak and outrageous version of Israeli society.

Gorlin made *The Holy Land* on a budget of approximately \$1.98, shooting mostly in somebody's Jerusalem apartment and on outdoor locations that he apparently used fast, before anyone asked to see a permit. He also borrowed some television news footage for the opening montage: a rapid-fire sequence of street demonstrations, tank forays, rubble, ambulances, charred human remains. The not-quite-apposite voiceover that accompanies these images, delivered in high-pitched, Russian-accented English, turns out to be the commentary of the handjob giver, an immigrant turned prostitute who is the film's de facto narrator. "Men in the Middle East are primitive and stupid," she declares in the flat tones of experience. "I hope the Jews and Arabs kill each other till there's no one left."

From this uplifting prologue, we proceed via shock cuts to meet our protagonist, Mendy (Oren Rehani), who is first seen in extreme close-up at his mother's breast and then (twenty years later) at the toilet bowl, masturbating over a bit of exposed cleavage in a newsmagazine. First impressions count. You don't quickly forget the moisture on Mendy's smooth face, the shallowness of his breath, the muscular tension behind the receding chin. For those who are familiar with the Orthodox world, though, none of this is as disturbing as the toast that Mendy's father offered a few moments earlier. "To the last Tisha b'Av," he said—that is, to the last day of mourning for the destruction of

the Temple. It seems that Young Mr. News Photo has been brought up among people who expect the Messiah to ride in any day now and toss the Muslims off the Mount.

Gorlin's barbed conceit is that everyone in *The Holy Land* inhabits some such territory of the imagination. For some, like the Uzi-toting settler known as The Exterminator (Arie Moskuna), Jerusalem has already received the Messiah and is fit to resume animal sacrifice. For others, like booming, bag-of-testosterone Mike (Saul Stein), Israel is coterminous with a cavelike bar—he calls it Mike's Place—where he can preside over his own little world. Mendy's fantasy begins to take shape in a strip club in Tel Aviv, The Love Boat. There he meets round-faced, frizzy-haired Sasha (Tchelet Semel) and gets from her the two-second-long "massage" that sets off the rest of the plot.

By now, you're probably wondering about the Palestinian characters. I assure you that they're present, they're important to the story, and they've got elaborate fantasies of their own. But Gorlin finds the Palestinians too close to the Israelis, too locked into struggle with them, to serve as the outside observers he needs. He is a runaway of sorts, an American-born Jew who studied in an army-friendly yeshiva and soldiered in an Israeli tank unit before breaking away from both Orthodoxy and militant Zionism. Now, apparently, he wants to see Israel through the eyes of someone who surpasses him in detachment; and so he gives us Sasha, a young Russian trapped in a place she hates.

She's a good character, this whore with a heart of scarred muscle. Watch her react with blank incredulity when Mendy shows up at The Love Boat for the second time, bearing a gift. Clock the seconds that pass, before she pushes herself to say, "Oh! A

present!" Notice, too, how she later plays pranks on her yeshiva boy and then regrets having taunted him, stands up for him (because his sweetness leaves him defenseless) and attacks him (because his sweetness is a club he holds over her). You can feel Gorlin himself switch sides during these exchanges, sometimes identifying with Mendy, sometimes stepping back to look at the situation through Sasha's cold eyes. He can pull off the trick because Semel and Rehani are both wonderfully transparent in their roles. The characters may posture for one another, but these two young actors never play to the camera—unlike Stein, whose Mike is vivid but too much the creation of an Actor.

Of course, Mendy's adventure finishes badly, and with a neatness that's all the more jarring for the lifelike disorder that's come before. Gorlin needs to learn about endings. And I'll bet he will—because he's already got brains, sensitivity, conscience, rhythm, two-thirds of a good touch with actors and plenty of nerve. Whatever his slip-ups as a first-time filmmaker, Gorlin succeeds in making *The Holy Land* come to scandalous life, before he makes it go boom.

Rougher than *The Holy Land*, even more cheaply made and also more urgent, is an hourlong documentary by Yulie Cohen Gerstel, *My Terrorist*, currently going on a national tour following a run at New York's Film Forum.

Greeted with outrage last year when it opened in Israel, *My Terrorist* recounts how Gerstel has sought to help Fahad Mihyi, who, as a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, helped put shrapnel into her arm in 1978 while murdering the friend who stood next to her. This attack took place on the streets of London, where Gerstel had just arrived as part of an El Al flight crew. She does not minimize the chronic fear that settled in her, the sense of guilt at having survived, the renewed determination to make Israel strong. (A member of a family that came to Palestine some 150 years ago, Gerstel literally grew up on Israel Defense Force Street.) The core of her film, though, is the story of how she slowly came to abhor what Israel was doing to the Palestinians; to see who was the victim and who the victimizer; to reject strongman solutions. By 2000, she was ready to begin corresponding with Mihyi, who was still in Dartmoor. When she became convinced he was a changed man, she volunteered to advocate his release—to the disgust of other survivors and of victims' families, whose views she has bravely put in the picture.

With its drippy music and desktop editing, *My Terrorist* may give the false impression that it's Gerstel's first film. That's not necessarily bad. The picture seems so raw

that you might imagine she learned to use a video camera solely to tell this story. Personal but never self-indulgent, compelling and compulsive in equal measure, *My Terrorist* is that rarity, a necessary film.

But enough of artlessness. July has also brought two intriguing movies—*The Cuckoo* and *Madame Satã*—that give you sociopolitical content and eye candy, too.

The Cuckoo, written and directed by Alexander Rogozhkin, is a tale set in the remote forests of Lapland toward the end of World War II. Two of the movie's characters are soldiers, who are on the loose after escaping death at the hands of their own forces. They are Veiko (Ville Haapasalo), a young Finnish student pressed into service with the German army, and Ivan (Viktor Bychkov), a middle-aged Russian who was deemed politically unreliable. Both take shelter with Anni (Anni-Kristiina Juuso), who would be your standard-issue lonely farm widow, except that she speaks the language of the Sami people, herds reindeer and enjoys a good old pagan romp with both men the forest has sent to her.

Cinematically, *The Cuckoo* is most interesting for its splendid scenery and silent-movie affinities. (The characters have no common language, so they make do with gestures and pigheadedness.) Thematically, it's arresting for Rogozhkin's decision to make his Soviet soldier the heavy: Ivan just can't get it through his head that Veiko is not a fascist. Considering the specific context of this story, rather than the general demands of mush-brained allegory, I think Rogozhkin is too hard on Ivan. Fortunately, though, *The Cuckoo* amounts to more than an antiwar fable. It's also a drama of isolation and sexual jealousy, a comedy of miscommunication and feminine wiles, a visual ode to the rough beauty of the northern lakes and mountains.

Finally, let me highly recommend a film about a different type of rough beauty: Karim Aïnouz's *Madame Satã*. Set in the 1930s in Rio de Janeiro's Lapa neighborhood, where every imaginable itch found a scratch it could afford, *Madame Satã* is based on the life of João Francisco dos Santos (1900–76): a proud and forceful gay black man, famous on the streets as a brawler, thief, killer, foster father and drag artiste. If dos Santos sounds like a complex package to put on film, be assured that Aïnouz's star, Lázaro Ramos, is nothing short of riveting in the role, and that the production wraps around him like so much shimmering crepe and spangles. The cinematography, by the extraordinary Walter Carvalho, is deep and rich during the many nocturnal scenes,

full of sepia textures in the daylight. The direction is languorous, subjective, brooding, elliptical. *Madame Satã* isn't content to recreate this man's world. It wants to put you into his skin—and to an amazing degree, it succeeds.

Screening Schedule: *The Nation* has received some complaints about my previous column, which was devoted to reflections on *Legally Blonde 2* and *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*. A waste of ink, the letter-writers claim—which is to say, they'd rather not think about the world we're living in.

Fair enough. For those who prefer to ignore contemporary culture, wonderful retrospectives are available. In Manhattan, the Museum of Modern Art is devoting the summer to old-style repertory programming at its Gramercy Theatre. For example, you can see archival prints of three great films by Kenji Mizoguchi—*Utamaro and His Five Women*, *Ugetsu* and *The Life of Oharu*—July 31 or August 2. For information: (212) 777-4900 or www.moma.org. If Brooklyn is more convenient for you, consider the BAMcinémathèque, currently showing a series of Aki Kaurismäki's films (which are of recent vintage but would rather not be). *Leningrad Cowboys Meet Moses*, *La vie de bohème*, *The Match Factory Girl*, *Drifting Clouds* and *Juha* are all on view July 22–27. For information: (718) 636-4100 or www.bam.org.

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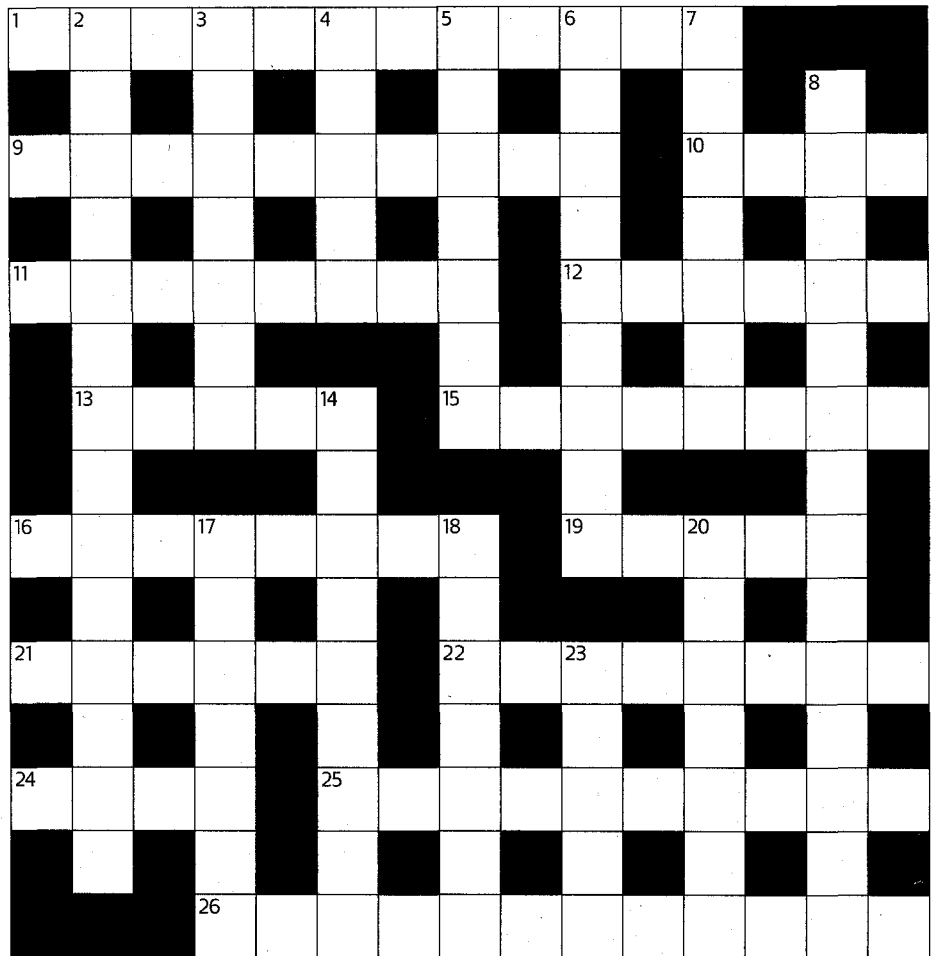
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ACROSS

- 1 Overheated and aggravated with confined hair—which some people associate with Easter. (3,5,4)
- 9 and 10 With a walkout, you find me and you returning to gently tap one in Paris. (Get's the air going, too.) (7,2,1,4)
- 11 Lead astray with fighting to a point that is just a matter of state. (8)
- 12 Losing fifty, the President's wife is not necessarily the saintly type that she once was. (6)
- 13 The beginning of a well-read book. (5)
- 15 A language of old Mesopotamia—something "icumen in" with a Scotsman. (8)
- 16 Your tire or your ego may be, but you don't want to get the middle part so, and sort of dine out around it! (8)
- 19 A sign could well read this, with a couple of words attached to the fire extinguisher, to put out the flames. (5)
- 21 You can't refuse these if from godfathers whose cash boxes are missing a hundred. (6)
- 22 A hopeless failure but not a quick drain on your assets. (4,4)
- 24 "Hey, soldier!" says the practitioner of Eastern discipline. (4)
- 25 Such as Morse on TV instead of radio? (10)
- 26 Is a "trot" part of the learning here? (6,6)

DOWN

- 2 One hopes not to get off this way, as one puts on a left shoe incorrectly. (2,3,5,4)
- 3 Stylish in the past, broad shoulders belong here. (7)
- 4 According to the last letter from Athens, it's nothing but a sort of game! (5)
- 5 Even the nonflying type sort of scare us! (7)



- 6 No head-hanging necessary, if you are so badly mashed after getting one from Caesar. (9)
- 7 What some people take after a big meal with an early resident. (7)
- 8 Italian painter that Browning wrote about. (Also peruse the Spanish, ending up with a sort that has to be fixed.) (6,3,5)
- 14 Is, if centrally misplaced, filled up around it—and quite pleased with the result. (9)
- 17 More suspicious or just ogling more? Fifty gets scarier! (7)
- 18 The one responsible for Alice proves the gods to be crazy, when a Russian flower is around it. (7)
- 20 Fix the door so you can open it! (7)
- 23 So one states it's not quite poetry! (5)

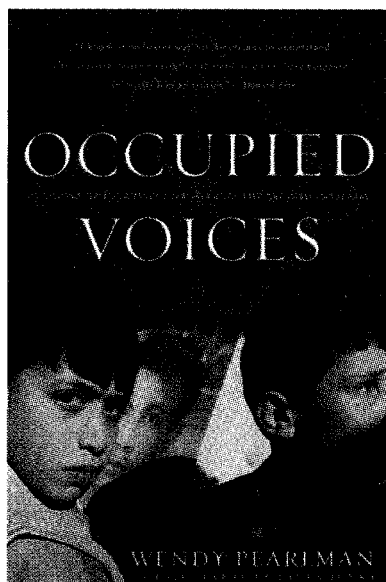
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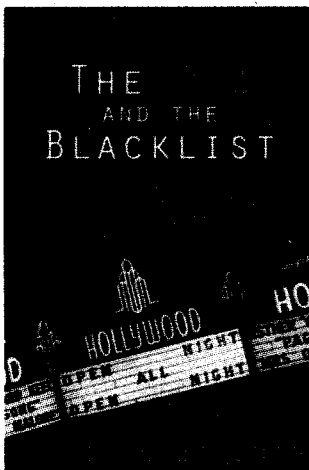
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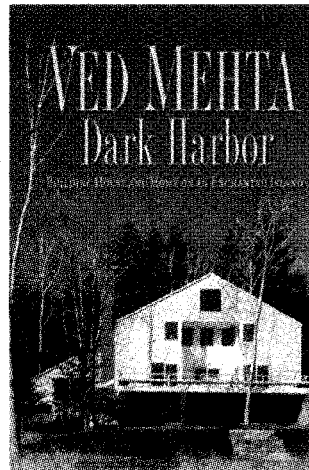
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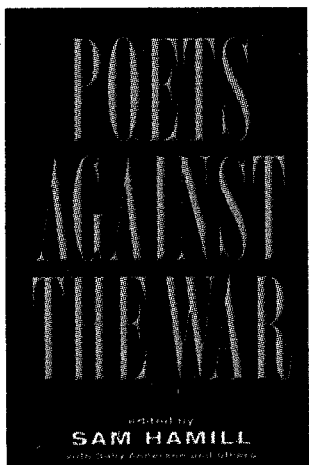
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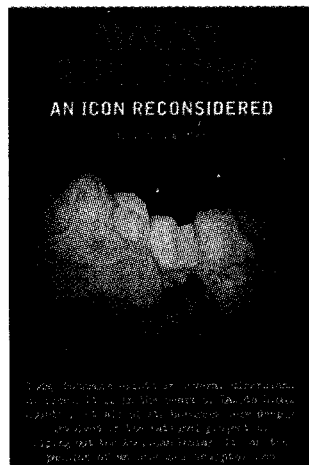
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